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APRIL 2006

neatoday

NCLB
IT DOESN'T ADD UP

4 WAYS IT COULD HELP

9 WAYS IT HURTS

3 THINGS THAT NEED WORK

1 STEP YOU CAN TAKE

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APRIL

VOLUME 24 > NUMBER 7 > 2006

features

COVER 24

RATING NCLB

Can we count the ways this law hurts teachers and kids? Four years after President Bush signed the so-called No Child Left Behind law, educators still struggle to make it work. A few ideas are well-intentioned, but overall, NCLB harms education. If this were math class, we'd say, "Check your answers!"

SINGLE-SEX EDUCATION

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Segregating classrooms by sex sounds old-fashioned, but it's back for the 21st century. With hopes of boosting student achievement, educators across the country are trying it.

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The Wages of Teaching 40

A *Newsweek* columnist calls for higher pay for teachers. Cushy hours and summer vacations are nothing more than a myth, she says. (As if we didn't know!)

PHOTO TOP: JEFF SCHULTZ; SMALL PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER RIGHT CARL TURCELL; NATHAN HAM; CAROLINE JOE; MARK TADE/GAZETTE COMMUNICATIONS

x Miki Finn

x Laura Ramirez

x Ashley Curtis

x Mrs. Susan Wassel

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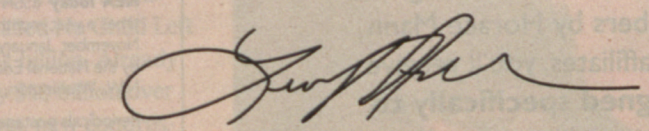
Numbers Game

I love math, always have. Much of this was spurred on by Mr. Walfred Lester, one of my high school teachers who, in the decades since, went on to become an award-winning calculus teacher (this from my mom, who sent a clip from our hometown paper). There's a beauty to numbers, the way they come together and tell their own story. ¶ Convert them into salary figures, and you get a good picture of how much society truly values a profession (see page 40). Convert them into student account numbers, and you get better ways for school cafeteria staff to serve up nutritious meals (see page 34). ¶ But as educators know, especially in this day of the No Child Left Behind law, numbers can be misused and deceptive. Just look at the overemphasis on test scores and adequate yearly progress figures, and the lack of attention on education funding (see page 29). ¶ That's why *NEA Today* finds the stories behind the numbers. We'll give you AYP figures—but we'll also tell you why they're driving Illinois second-grade teacher Cheryl Chapman out of the profession. We've got numbers, and we need your stories to bring the reality of NCLB alive. ¶ Check in at www.neatoday.org, or e-mail us at neatoday@nea.org.



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PHOTOS TOP: NATHAN HAM; MIDDLE: CORBIS

This month on neatoday.org

Rating the No Child Left Behind law

Tell us what you think of NCLB and read your colleagues' comments. Take our "high-stakes test," click through an expanded timeline, find a wealth of NCLB resources, and become an online NCLB activist—tell Congress to increase education funding with the click of a mouse!

Turn back the pages of education history

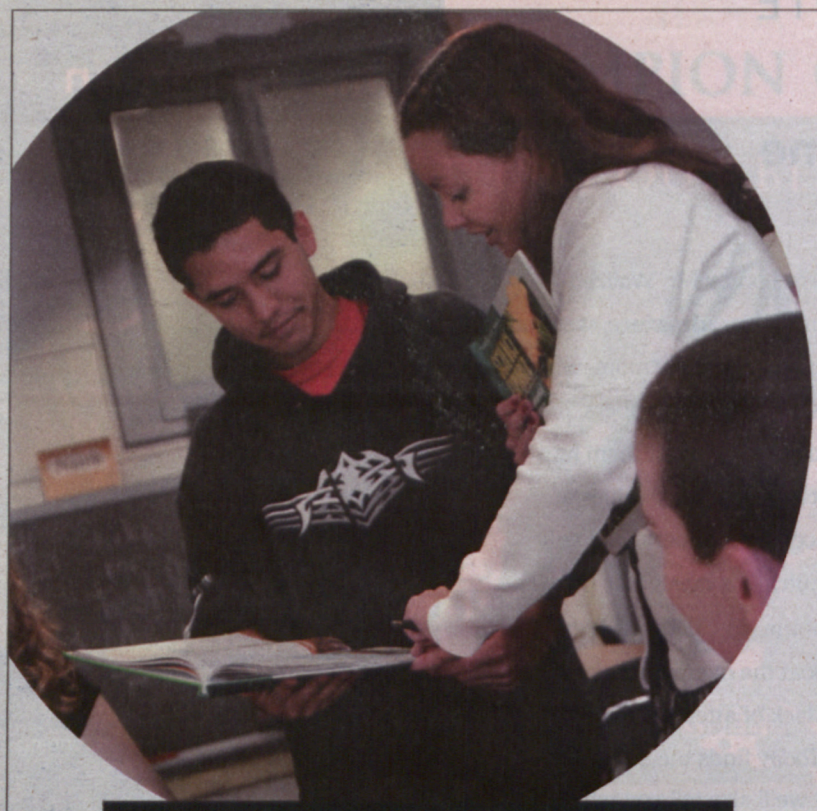
Check out www.nea.org/aboutnea/neahistory.html for a special tour of NEA and ATA history, including video clips and photo galleries, and test your knowledge with our online quiz.

Celebrate the historic merger between NEA and ATA

by visiting www.nea.org/aboutnea/ata.html for a full account of how these two great associations united for public education.

Start talking

Join other NEA members in conversations about the education issues most important to you. Visit www.nea.org/cs/.



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NEA Today (ISSN 0734-7219) is published eight times a year, monthly, in September, October, November, January, February, March, April, and May by the National Education Association, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036-3290.

Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *NEA Today*, Attn: NEA Business & Finance Address Change, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: 202-822-7065.

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NEA Today is mailed to all NEA members as a benefit of membership. Nonmember subscription prices: $65 for institution subscriptions; $100 for individual domestic and foreign subscriptions. For members, subscriptions represent $4.55 of annual dues.

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Enough is *Enough!*

What makes you angry? Is it when someone is unwilling to believe that class size matters? How about when people insist that the quality of the teacher and education support professional doesn't matter? What about hearing a denial that parental involvement is critical to a child's educational success?

While all of those scenarios often cause me to pause and wonder, nothing has gotten my attention more than recent actions undertaken by the U.S. Congress and the White House—actions that will harm millions and millions of kids.

Just days before Christmas, Congress gave children the cruelest present they could ever receive. They cut federal education funding by more than $624 million, and slashed the so-called No Child Left Behind law by $1 billion. Already under-funded by $40 billion over the past five years, new congressional cuts left the law with less money than it had when it was created! Under the guise of hurricane relief, they also passed the first taxpayer-funded national voucher program.

That was just the beginning. Other programs fell under the congressional hatchet. Title I was cut by $28 million. Pell Grants—need-based money that has sent scores of low-income students to college—were frozen. And special education spending was reduced by $7 million—the first time the program has been cut in an entire decade.

But Congress didn't just hurt children and students when it comes to learning. They also cut 60,000 low-income children from Medicaid. This represents the very first time since the program was created—more than four decades ago—that Medicaid has been reduced for kids who are *already* struggling.

A few weeks after Congress made their cuts, President George W. Bush hopped aboard the budget-cutting bandwagon. He presented a plan that cuts $2.1 billion from education spending, eliminating 42 programs that he considers to be unnecessary—art and technology, parent resource centers, and drug-free schools programs.

Something is desperately wrong when folks can say they want to leave no child behind, then turn around and level the worst assault on education that our nation has ever seen.

Team NEA, enough is enough! As educators, we know nothing is *more necessary* than helping children grow into safe, responsible, and well-rounded adults.

Every child has the *basic right* to attend a great public school, and we must step up our efforts to keep that right protected. That means spreading the message to the public that we need their support like never before. It means holding all elected leaders—and those who hope to be elected, be they Democrats, Republicans, or Independents—accountable to our nation's children.

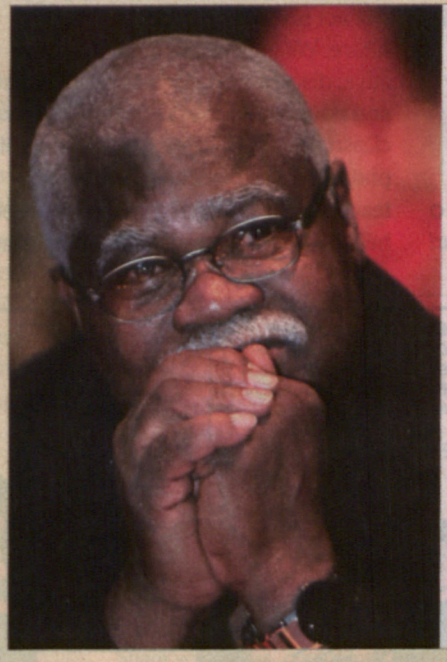


PHOTO: SANDY SCHAEFFER

"Every child has the *basic right* to attend a great public school, and we must step up our efforts to keep that right protected. That means spreading the message to the public that we need their support like never before."

—REG WEAVER

America's children are not pawns on some political chessboard. They are not slogans to be trotted out when an election looks like it's going to be close. And they are not nameless, faceless numbers to be eliminated from the federal budget—particularly during the same time tax cuts for the already-rich are being made permanent.

Children are our future. This nation can and must do better, and Team NEA, it's time for us to lead the way.

Reg Weaver

NEA PRESIDENT REG WEAVER

BETTER TEACHING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Your story on technology could not have come at a better time. I am a strong believer that technology is a tool for teaching and learning, not a lesson to be isolated without context. If it is, we stand to lose other content classes like music, art, and foreign language. I propose we create specific technology lessons to be embedded within our regular content. In my own (non-technology) class, students create PowerPoint presentations, design Web sites, and make their own movies using editing software and digital cameras.

ROBERT CRAWFORD
Louisville, Kentucky

Unfortunately the cover story only had room to scratch the surface of handheld computing, blogging, and podcasting in education. However, I'm excited because it will spur more interest in new learning tools.

TONY VINCENT
Omaha, Nebraska, via learninginhand.com

I teach high school math and am a member of our district's technology committee. I found your cover story very timely for our district. We have recently spent over $200,000 on new technology for next school year (quite a sum for a district of fewer than 1,000 students) and have six days of in-service scheduled this summer. I think the testimony of other teachers who were afraid of technology and the wealth of Web sites you mentioned will be comforting to our more tech-leery colleagues.

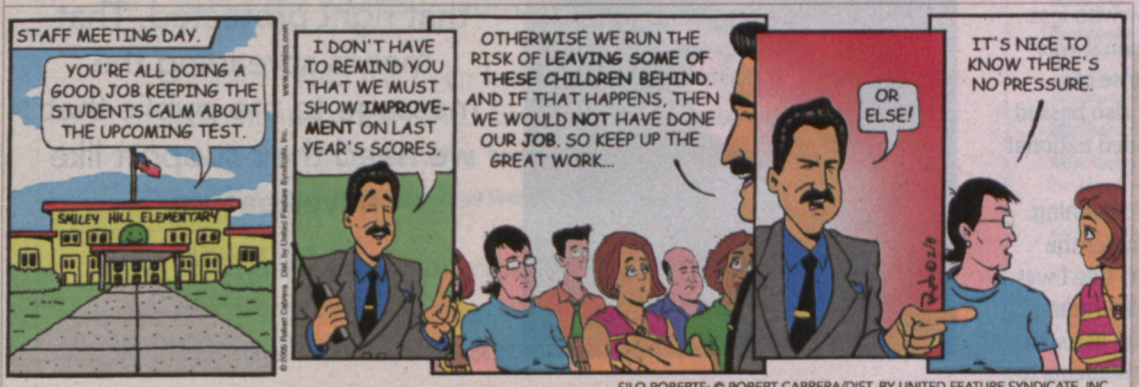
DENISE CORIO
Hillsboro, Missouri

I was excited to read your cover story. It is an inspiring article that offers teachers many helpful tips. I would like to add that in many cases, teachers can look to their school library media specialist or librarian for assistance in evaluating instructional Web sites and producing their own content via new technologies. Librarians have been using information technologies since they first came down the pike—from blogging and podcasting to wikis and whiteboards. (Plus, we love to be asked!)

TERESA PFEIFER
Springfield, Massachusetts

Obsolescence comes out of the box as fast as the new thing. Learning gadgetry will not prepare our students for the future. We must teach them to be creative, discerning, original, independent, and powerful thinkers. The emphasis on classroom use of PDAs, computers, cell phones, and educational gaming is teaching our children a lesson—learned helplessness. We cannot allow children to turn their brains into butterscotch pudding as they sit hunched over their latest, greatest, new thing.

JOAN KROHN
Merrill, Wisconsin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YOU'RE ALL DOING A GOOD JOB KEEPING THE STUDENTS CALM ABOUT THE UPCOMING TEST.
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I DON'T HAVE TO REMIND YOU THAT WE MUST SHOW IMPROVEMENT ON LAST YEAR'S SCORES.
OTHERWISE WE RUN THE RISK OF LEAVING SOME OF THESE CHILDREN BEHIND. AND IF THAT HAPPENS, THEN WE WOULD NOT HAVE DONE OUR JOB. SO KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK...
OR ELSE!
IT'S NICE TO KNOW THERE'S NO PRESSURE.

SILO ROBERTS: © ROBERT CABRERA/DIST. BY UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE, INC.

'TIS A GOOD READ

The interview with Frank McCourt ("Teacher Man," March) was inspirational. I've never heard anyone articulate so simply and perfectly all the things I've felt about teaching during the last 35 years. Every one of his answers was one I would have been proud to give. I was cheering out loud as I read his words and by the end of the all-too-short interview, I had tears in my eyes.

MICHAEL J. BRENNAN
Jefferson, Ohio

The photo of Frank McCourt was absolutely telling. It clearly showed the state of many classrooms in the United States: outdated, abused, and depressing. I absolutely understand why our education system is at best mediocre. My two high-achieving children will follow in Mr. McCourt's and my footsteps over my dead body. I want them to work in a professional environment and earn a return on their college investment.

GLORIA SHIMANEK
Texarkana, Texas

Mr. McCourt speaks for me and probably the majority of teachers in America right now.

DOUG PARROTT
Mason, Ohio

FRUSTRATED JOB-SWITCHER

As one of the new group of teachers who chucked corporate America for the classroom two years ago, I found your article, "Swapping the Boardroom for the Classroom" (March) to be naive. I took your article to my class for other teachers seeking certification. Yes, we all

CYBER COMMENTARY

HOORAY FOR DR. SEUSS'S DAY!

I never post about my students. Today, however, we did something I want to write about. We celebrated Dr. Seuss's birthday [as part of NEA's Read Across America.] We went to a nearby elementary school and read to the students. We visited classrooms, dropping off bookmarks, pencils, stickers, and temporary tattoos. We talked about reading, did some word searches, challenged each other to tongue-twisters, and had a great time. I teach at an alternative high school. My students are high at-risk, referred to us for persistent negative behaviors. Watching them be positive role models—reading, mentoring, challenging, laughing—was something I will never forget. I gave them the opportunity, and they rose to the occasion.

From shutupandteach.org

WANT TO WEIGH IN?

Chat with your colleagues on NEA's discussion boards at **www.neatoday.org/talkback.html**.

left the boring corporate life of meetings, memos, and mergers in order to try to give something back. However, what we have found is an even larger, moribund bureaucracy that dwarfs anything we left behind.

Don't get me wrong, we all love teaching. But we have all also found teaching out of touch with the reality of what is happening in the world.

TOM CROFT
Frederick, Maryland

ONE STEP AT A TIME

My experience with race relations in the classroom (Last Bell, March) hinged on the same principle applied in music and athletics: practice. I grew up in a small, all-White country school. Same food, same religion, same culture, same thinking. For the last 35 years, I've lived in Southern California. Ten years of teaching at an ethnically mixed school made me more than comfortable with different cultures. The question of who we feel connected to changes with time and experience. Daily exposure with quiet conversation is what leads to acceptance and understanding.

BRUCE JONES
Ontario, Canada

MORE MATH FOR GIRLS

I am a high school math teacher and my master's thesis was on gender equity in math ("Should girls be encouraged to take more math?" Debate, March). In my research, as well as during the past 18 years teaching, I have found that if girls take more math in high school, they have more academic confidence and go to college with that confidence.

PAULA MOREAU
Montague, Mississippi

MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

"THE LITTLE GUYS LOOK UP TO the high schoolers, who get to have fun and show off their reading abilities."

ARIZONA TEACHER MARY KOHN *on NEA's Read Across America.* Sierra Vista Herald, *March 6, 2006.*

"THEORIES ARE...MEANT TO BE studied, tested and refined. That is the essence of science."

FLORIDA TEACHER BILL HAUSMANN *on teachers' approach to evolution and intelligent design.* Florida Today, *March 5, 2006.*

LET'S TALK

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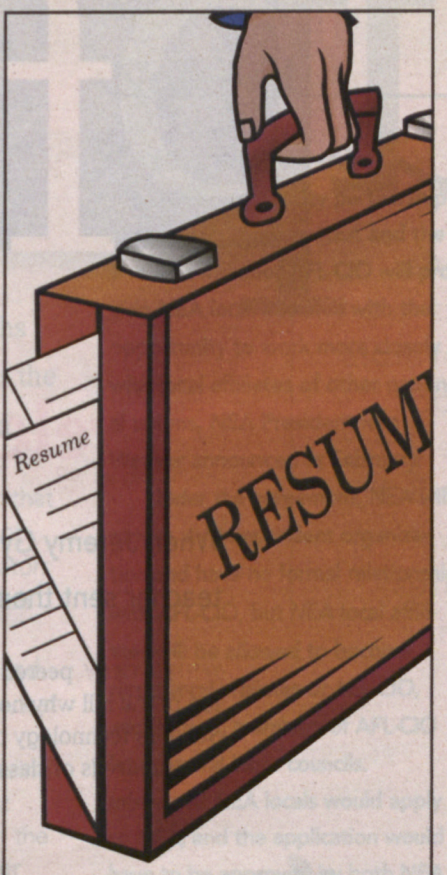
Letters are edited for length and clarity.



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Wireless Studies

When Jeremy Gypton's social studies class investigated the Middle Ages, this Arizona teacher sent them to a Web site with live video from the site of the Battle of Hastings.

WHILE THEY peered into their laptops—no outdated history books here!—"Students could clearly see from the top of the hill why holding the high ground was so important," says Gypton, who also serves as Empire High School's technology coordinator. "It was a real a-ha! moment for them."

Hundreds of classrooms across the country have already put laptops into every lap. (Think Maine, where every seventh-grader got a laptop courtesy of the state government.) But brand-new Empire High in Vail, Arizona, stands out from the virtual crowd. Unlike most existing schools that make the switch to technology, teachers and students here opted for wireless from the get-go, and the school was built for the latest tech.

Now Empire teachers can better engage tech-savvy students by customizing curriculum with the latest research, maps, and videos, instead of using static textbooks. But they haven't completely given up on paper—Gypton still gives paper tests, and there is plenty of pulp in the library.

Empire High teacher **Becky Ogle** helps her students with a Web development project.

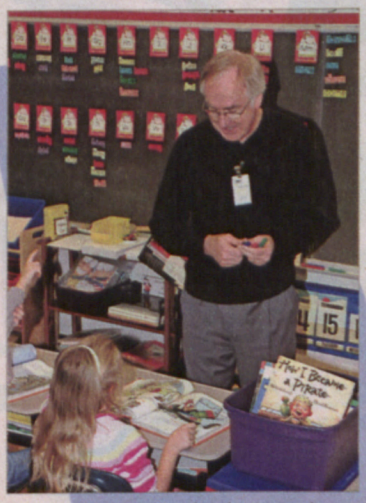
HIGH TIMES

Although most drug use by teenagers continues to decline, the National Institute on Drug Abuse recently reported modest increases in the use of sedatives, OxyContin, and inhalants. Inhalants cause particular concern because teens said they believed that they weren't very dangerous.

PHOTO LEFT: JEFF TOPPING; PHOTO BOTTOM: CORBIS

Trading Spaces

Sure, your lawmakers went to school years ago, but do they remember? During the weeks devoted to testing, or the months when the school budget can't cover the cost of paper, it seems the statehouse is oh-so far from the classroom.



After spending the day in an elementary school, Indiana State Rep. **Dennis Avery** said: "Teachers today have to be a lot more flexible."

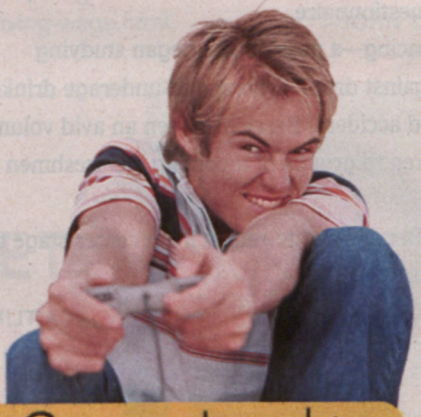
GETTING COMMUNITY leaders into schools, so that they can see what really happens, was the goal of dozens of Indiana teachers, who hosted "Legislators as Teachers" in November. Based on NEA-Alaska's model, the Indiana State Teachers Association program didn't just invite legislators to stop by and smile, but actually required them to lead lessons, eat in the cafeteria, and keep students on task.

"I want our legislators to know that we are doing a great job," says Liz Chang, of Evansville's West Terrace Elementary, a school that participated in the program. "It is hard work, but we could do better with more funding."

[STATISTIC]

The percentage of **TEENAGERS** who say they have used an **ILLICIT DRUG.**

SOURCE: THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE



Do Violent Video Games Lead to AGGRESSION?

Your students who spend every afternoon taking aim with digital guns may actually be changing the way their brain works. And, a recent study shows that they may become inured to violence.

WHEN UNIVERSITY of Missouri-Columbus (UM-C) researchers showed violent images to male college students—like a man holding a gun to another's head—they found that the participants who routinely played violent video games showed fewer brainwaves of a specific type.

Then, when they played a hot-button game with the students, asking them to blast an opponent with noise, they also found that the video players were more likely to behave aggressively.

"People often assume that any negative effects of playing violent games are short-lived," said Bruce Bartholow, UM-C assistant professor of psychological sciences. "But these results suggest that repeated exposure to violent video games has lasting negative consequences for both brain function and behavior."

Notepad

A New Partnership

A new labor solidarity partnership agreement between NEA and the 9 million-member AFL-CIO will provide NEA local affiliates with the opportunity to work more closely with local affiliates of other national unions, NEA President Reg Weaver announced in February.

Under the agreement, NEA will remain an independent organization and have no formal relationship with AFL-CIO, but NEA local affiliates will be allowed to become direct local affiliates of AFL-CIO, and, in turn, members of AFL-CIO local central labor councils. Interested NEA locals would apply to NEA, and the application would have to be approved by both NEA and the relevant NEA state affiliate.

Members of AFL-CIO local central labor councils collaborate on common goals, such as increasing parental involvement in schools and protecting employees' incomes, pensions, and health benefits. Both organizations have noted that students benefit when their parents earn living wages and have health benefits for their children.

"In this political climate, our organizations need to build on our common goals, and advocate together for our members and children," Weaver said. "Through joint activities, we can better strengthen our communities, strengthen our public schools, and strengthen our organizations."

Have a great idea?

> Send it by mail:
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PHOTO TOP: COURTESY OF ISTA; PHOTO BOTTOM: CORBIS

There She Is, Miss America!

And she has both beauty and brains going for her.

RECENTLY CROWNED Jennifer Berry is a University of Oklahoma (OU) student and NEA Student member, majoring in elementary education. She plans to use her $30,000 prize to pursue a graduate degree in education.

"Education is the foundation for a successful and secure nation," Berry told the judges in a pre-pageant questionnaire.

Berry wowed the judges with her dancing—a passion she began studying at age 3—and her thoughtful platform against drunk driving and underage drinking. Since losing a friend to an alcohol-related accident, Berry has been an avid volunteer and spokesperson for the issue, and has spoken to groups of incoming OU freshmen regarding the potential dangers of alcohol.

After this year of roses and crowns, Berry plans to return from center stage to the classroom, going back to OU for her senior year.

—CAITLIN HICKEY

[STATISTIC]

The percentage of **10TH-GRADERS** who say they expect to earn a Ph.D. or other **GRADUATE-LEVEL** degree.

SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

IN TEACHERS WE TRUST

Honest as the day is long, that's you. In Gallup's annual poll on the honesty and ethics of people in different professions, teachers ranked among the top of the trustworthy—as usual. Nurses earned the very highest rating, and telemarketers and car salespeople got the very lowest. Pharmacists and doctors also did well, but teachers outscored police officers and clergy.

PHOTO TOP: COURTESY OF MISS AMERICA ORGANIZATION; PHOTO BOTTOM: PHOTODISC

Target: A Living Wage

After 37 years behind the wheel, Virginia's Margie Claiborne knows her way around a school bus. She's qualified for a commercial driver's license, is up-to-date on all the latest equipment, and has a veteran's knack for keeping a lid on student misbehavior.

AND FOR ALL THAT, what does she earn? About $10,000 a year. So little that she has to take a second job, while also finding time to take classes and care for her elderly father. It all makes her feel, she says, "Like I'm behind the 8-ball."

Such conditions led Jerry Parham, education support professional rep for the Sussex County Education Association, to approach the Virginia Education Association and NEA for help with a living wage campaign. Now, using some very convincing data, they're working to persuade community members.

Take inspiration from the living wage campaigns succeeding all over the country. Start by figuring out the cost of living in your community—the Economic Policy Institute has a helpful calculator at www.epi.org—then learn more about how other ESPs are winning at www.nea.org/pay/living-wage.html. —JOHN O'NEIL

ALPHABET SOUP

If A=F and B=G, D=?

(Hint: It's not I.)

NEED A MOMENT? About 65,000 seventh-graders in New York City faced an English test in January where the lettering system for some questions didn't match up with available answers.

Administrators found the goof before kids actually took the test. Rather than reissue new answer sheets or give children extra time, teachers instructed students to be aware of the problem.

It's not rocket science to mark F instead of A, but this make-or-break exam determines whether students go on to eighth grade next year or not. Tom Dunn, of the New York State Department of Education, said the alternating ABCD FGHJ pattern (skipping the I) represents "the latest thinking in tests." He added that state officials believe the test is valid and will analyze the results.

Note: Officials will get some extra time to check their own answers.

Global Takes

Afghani Beheading

Taliban militants beheaded a teacher in rural Afghanistan in January because the 45-year-old had allowed girls to study at his school. The former Taliban regime, which remains powerful in Afghani outposts, had forbidden girls from school. Since their ouster in 2001, thousands of Afghani girls have returned to school, but Taliban insurgents also have forced at least 100 schools to close.

A Price for Education

After more than 20 years of free education, Botswana announced it will charge secondary students up to $84 a year. Since per capita income averages about $3,200, the move likely will prevent many, especially girls, from attending schools.

Stressed in Hong Kong

After two Hong Kong teachers committed suicide, thousands took to the streets in January, calling for fewer working hours. The Hong Kong Professional Teachers Union, an Education International affiliate, said teachers are working up to 70 hours a week under intense pressure following new federal education reforms. Education secretary Fanny Law came under fire when she said, "If their death is related to education reforms, then why did only two [commit suicide?]"

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PHOTO TOP: COURTESY OF VEA; PHOTO BOTTOM: CORBIS

FIRST 5 YEARS

Faced with an elementary school in dire need of curb appeal, Tyler Duff organized "sweat equity" in the form of 250 college students to pitch in with painting and landscaping. But even with ample human resources, Duff, an NEA Student member, had no materials budget. So he applied for and—bingo!—received a $1,000 NEA grant to fund the repairs.

Gotta Getta Grant

NEW TEACHERS can always use some cash for projects, so follow Dunn's lead and flex your grant-writing skills.

"If you provide a clear statement of your financial need, and make a persuasive case that your project will benefit the [student chaper or local Association] and the community, you'll be a strong candidate for a grant," says Duff. "Someone will say 'yes' if you keep at it."

Grants tailored to everything from studio art projects to educational nutrition are available at www.nea.org/grants. Get started early. You'll need plenty of time to develop and refine your vision, secure buy-in from administration, and prepare the forms and supporting materials.

TRADE SECRETS

The skills you use on the job can help another member with a dilemma on the home front.

▶ **THIS MONTH:** Cynthia Baird, who teaches English at Sangre de Cristo High School in Monte Vista, Colorado, offers insights on caring for aging parents.

Parenting Your Parent

The care of an aging parent is a journey, and, as with any journey, the first steps are the hardest, full of reversals and revelations. The journey begins with acceptance. It continues with awareness. It requires attention to self and attention to others. It calls for honesty in emotions. It demands the relinquishing of any sense of reciprocity.

The journey is arduous and very, very difficult. But it will bring you full circle, from one bookend to another, if you follow some simple guidelines.

SET BOUNDARIES. Do not let guilt lead you into compromising your mental or physical health or that of your family.

ACCESS ALL ASSISTANCE available for your parent. Meals on Wheels, senior citizens' activities, and Social Services are wonderful community assets.

BE A WILLING CAREGIVER. Avoid the "shoulds" and focus on the "want tos." Voluntary care-giving is always healthier than guilt-laden caregiving.

GOT A TIP TO SHARE?

We're looking for a history teacher to advise fellow members on how to research their family's genealogy. If you'd like to be considered, e-mail **clong@nea.org** with your name and local, a brief description of what you do, and your top three tips.

PHOTO TOP: A.J. MAST; ILLUSTRATION BOTTOM: FIONA HAWTHORNE

ON THE ROAD

TELL US MORE

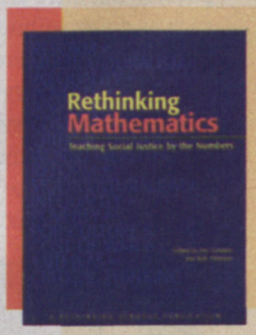
As high-stakes testing and standards-based curricula become a way of life in the classroom, is it still possible to take your students on field trips? We want to hear about the fun—but educational—adventures you've planned this spring, and the ways that you continue to provide outside-the-classroom life experiences for students. Send us your stories at neatoday-reply@list.nea.org.

[STATISTIC]

The percentage of **TEACHERS** who teach **SUMMER** school or work another job.

SOURCE: NEA'S STATUS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLTEACHER, 2003.

BOOK FOCUS



Calculating Controversy

IT MAY SEEM unconventional to discuss integers and inequality in the same lesson, but a new book says it's a great strategy for simultaneously teaching math and social justice. The book, *Rethinking Mathematics: Teaching Social Justice by the Numbers,* is the latest brainchild of the Wisconsin-based organization, Rethinking Schools. Rather than succumbing to the fill-in-the-blanks style of learning brought about by No Child Left Behind's emphasis on standardized testing, the new text takes a different approach by combining standard math subjects like ratios and geometry with pressing social issues. Chapters like "Home Buying While Brown or Black" and "Sweatshop Accounting" deal with sexism, class discrimination, and other societal ills. "Students can recognize the power of mathematics as an essential analytical tool to understand and potentially change the world, rather than merely regarding math as a collection of disconnected rules to be rotely memorized and regurgitated," editors Eric Gutstein and Bob Peterson say.

—DANIEL MOISE

Witness to History

DO YOU REMEMBER, just a few decades ago, when Black students read the hand-me-down textbooks of White students? When pregnant teachers were forced to take unpaid leaves?

For nearly 150 years, NEA has played a major role in the growth of education and the teaching profession, tackling social issues and improving conditions for students and teachers. And, you've been a part of it—as members, advocates, and witnesses.

Share your story! How has your profession changed over the years? How has NEA affected you and your career? Visit www.nea.org/aboutnea/history.html to learn more about our history and submit a story—or write us at: your-history@nea.org, or NEA, 1201 16th St. N.W., Suite 710, Washington, DC 20036. (Send pictures, if you have them!)

ILLUSTRATION TOP: LEVAN/BARBEE STUDIO; PHOTO BOTTOM: NEA ARCHIVES

Understanding Poverty

An innovative workshop helps educators close the achievement gap.

Sitting around tables scattered throughout the school library, the faculty of Tulakes Elementary School in Oklahoma City gripped steaming cups of coffee in one hand, pens in the other, as they scribbled furiously in their notebooks. Their assignment: to define poverty.

As participants in a workshop called "A Framework for Understanding Poverty," the educators at Tulakes in Oklahoma's Putnam City Schools, where more than 95 percent of students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals because of their families' income levels, are working to bridge the gap of misunderstanding between poverty and middle class. The program introduces educators to the culture of poverty and the obstacles it throws in front of students trying to succeed in school.

"We're always hearing about how we need to close the achievement gap, but there isn't as much discussion about why those gaps exist in the first place. This workshop addresses the 'whys' and offers real strategies to solve these problems rather than just identifying they exist with tests," said NEA Executive Committee Member Carolyn Crowder, who helped create a partnership among the Oklahoma Education Association, NEA, and American Fidelity Assurance Company to bring the workshop to Putnam City Schools.

Executive Committee member **Carolyn Crowder** joins Oklahoma City educators at a workshop about poverty's effects on students.

"After hearing about the success of the workshop in North Carolina schools, I wanted to bring the program here to Oklahoma, and hopefully help introduce it to other states. One of the benefits of being affiliated with a national organization such as NEA is that progressive partnerships can be established to offer schools these kinds of resources."

At the Tulakes workshop in Oklahoma City, volunteers from each table read their definitions of poverty to the group: "having limited opportunities and life experiences," "having a lack of financial resources," "having to decide between buying laundry detergent or food."

The exercise showed the educators that even though most of us have preconceived notions of poverty, unless we've experienced it directly, we can't fully understand what it means to be poor.

According to author, education expert, and workshop creator Ruby Payne, living in poverty can be defined by "the extent to which an individual does without resources." Most people consider the lack of financial resources to be the cause for poverty, but there are seven other factors that can contribute, such as doing without emotional resources, mental resources (including the acquired skills of reading, writing, and simple computing necessary for daily life), spiritual resources, physical resources, support systems, and relationships and role models.

The leaders of the workshop, Tina Child and Dutchess Maye, both from the North Carolina Teacher Academy, also told the Tulakes educators about the hidden rules associated with different economic classes. Most teachers and administrators haven't been exposed to the hidden rules of poverty, and poor students are unaware of the middle class's hidden rules, the same rules under which schools operate. Unless those rules are shared, the chances of success for children in poverty are limited.

For example, the Tulakes teachers learned many people in poverty live in the moment because survival is their top priority—their energies are consumed with simply getting through each day and making sure there is food on the table and lights on in the house. Those in the middle class live with their eye to the future, where achievement is the top priority. To the middle class, education is crucial for financial success. To those in poverty, education is revered in the abstract, but it's not considered a long-term reality.

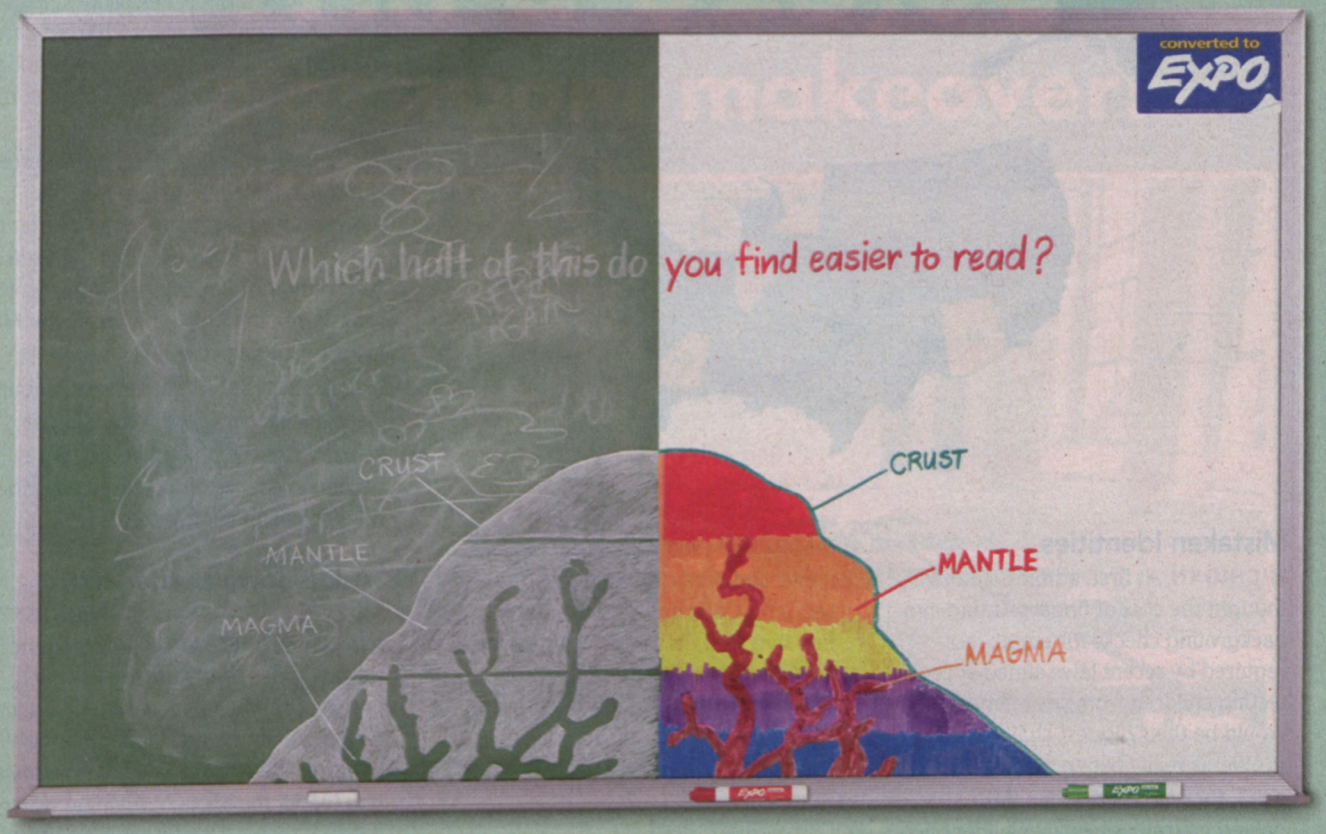
According to Payne, educators "can neither excuse students nor scold them for not knowing [the hidden rules]; as educators, we must teach them and provide support, insistence and expectations."

Child and Maye explained that the best way to help students learn the hidden rules and increase their chances for academic success is to act as a role model. By example, role models can teach students about the unspoken cues and habits of the middle class.

Teachers, administrators, and all school employees should seek out students in need of a positive role model and create partnerships with organizations that offer volunteer mentors or tutors. Spending as little as 10 minutes a day with a student who may have no other positive role model in his or her life can make a lasting difference.

—CINDY LONG

PHOTO: NATE BILLINGS



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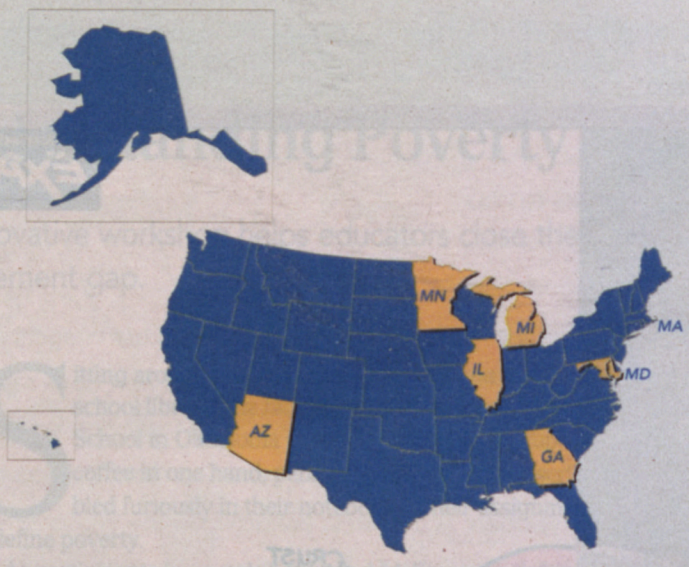

Mistaken Identities

MICHIGAN At first, administrators thought the cost of fingerprinting and background checks for employees—required by recent laws aimed at protecting children from sex offenders—would be their biggest challenge. But problems really began when the **Michigan Education Association (MEA)** had to defend educators mistakenly identified by the screenings as criminals. For the approximately 200,000 public school employees involved, nearly 4,600 offenses were listed.

"We've heard from hundreds of our members who are victims of mistaken identity or errors in the report," says MEA President Iris Salters. "In numerous cases, completely innocent, hard-working school employees have to spend time away from their classrooms or worksites to clear their good names in order to retain their employment—not to mention their reputations." MEA obtained a temporary restraining order against the public disclosure of the list.

ESPs Seek New Code

ILLINOIS Officials with the **Illinois Education Association (IEA)** have introduced legislation to address education support professional (ESP) concerns through changes in the state school code. These concerns include increasing accumulated sick leave, broadening recall rights, prohibiting subcontracting during a collective bargaining term, maintaining active status for employees injured on the job, and establishing bid requirements and public hearings for districts seeking to subcontract school non-certified staff when a contract has expired.

"There are numerous statutory areas that need to be addressed to provide ESPs with job security and due process of law," says IEA ESP Specialist Stacy Burroughs.

Big Push for Pensions

MARYLAND Members of the **Maryland State Teachers Association (MSTA)** are in the throes of a campaign to improve teacher pensions. Maryland teachers receive 38 percent of their salaries (minus state taxes) when they retire, compared with almost 75 percent in Pennsylvania (tax free) and 60 percent in New York. As part of the "Push for Pension" drive, MSTA members have hosted more than 500 house parties, sent over 30,000 e-mails to legislators, and sponsored legislative receptions. "I am proud of how our members and staff have seized the challenge of moving this grassroots effort out of the schools and worksites to the halls of the Maryland General Assembly," says Pat Foerster, MSTA president. Maryland is the third-wealthiest state in the nation with a huge surplus this year.

In the Right Direction

GEORGIA Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue is one of almost 40 governors urging their legislatures to support increased public school funding. Coincidentally, their states are holding gubernatorial elections in the fall. Governor Perdue, for example, has proposed a 4 percent salary increase, a $100 gift card to help teachers buy classroom supplies, and state underwriting for a portion of teacher health-insurance premiums.

"The 4 percent is good, but 6 percent is more in line with taking us in the direction we need to go," says Merchuria Chase Williams, president of the **Georgia Association of Educators (GAE)**. Georgia ranks ninth in population and is the fifth-fastest-growing state. "Yet, we're 18th in teacher salaries," Williams says. Though Georgia teachers received a 2 percent raise in 2005–06, their take-home pay declined because of increased contributions to health insurance.

Trickle-down Leadership

ARIZONA Members of the **Mesa ESP Association (MESPA)** have learned their lessons well. After studying the fine points of school finance, coalition building, and member recruitment at the hands of the **Arizona Education Association (AEA),** the Mesa bargaining team recently won a 3.4 percent raise for all ESPs, a district-covered insurance increase, a summer bonus of 4.4 percent, and a one-time payment that averaged $450 per educator. "AEA got our people trained, and the results have been good," says Richard Berumen, MESPA president. Mesa is one of seven ESP locals targeted for assistance by AEA.

Educators Set the Agenda

MINNESOTA **Education Minnesota (EM)** launched a five-year communications campaign in January to build public support for schools and establish EM and its locals as the dominant sources of information on education issues. The "Schools First!" campaign includes more than $1 million in TV advertising to encourage Minnesotans to voice their opinions at an EM Web site (www.schoolsfirst.org). EM President Judy Schaubach says the campaign was launched to hear people's views about public schools. "Our goal is to generate a great statewide public discussion about schools," she says. In conjunction with the ad campaign, 15 public "listening sessions" were held across the state.

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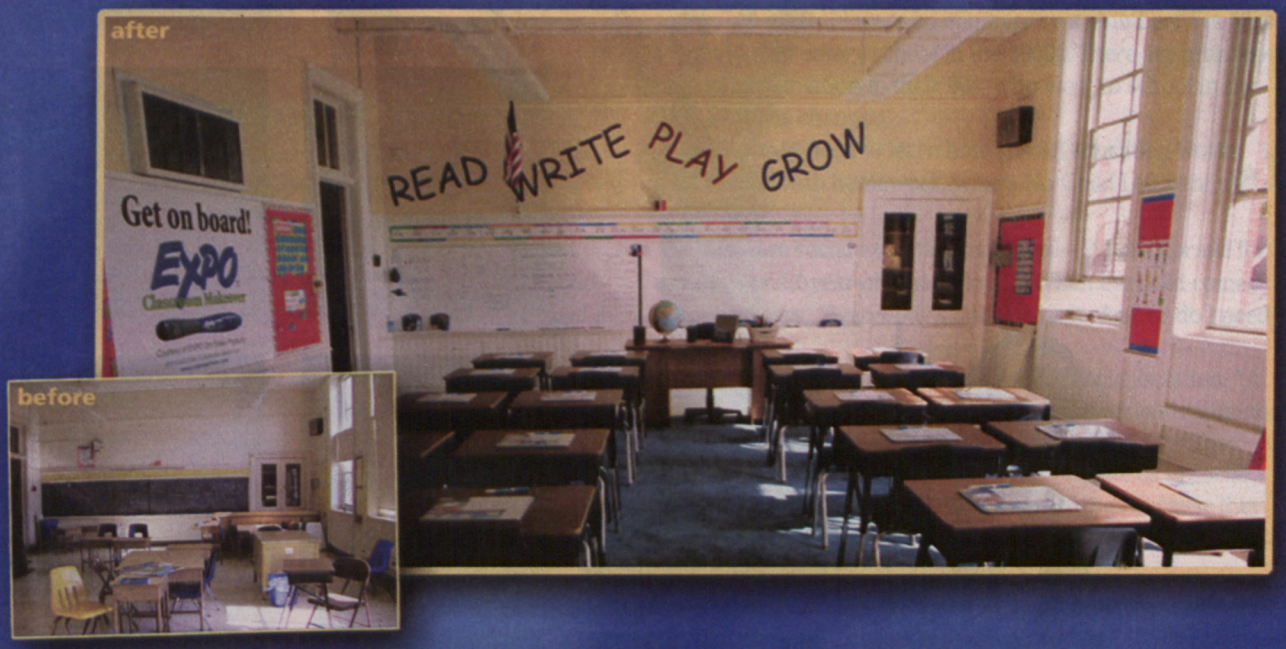

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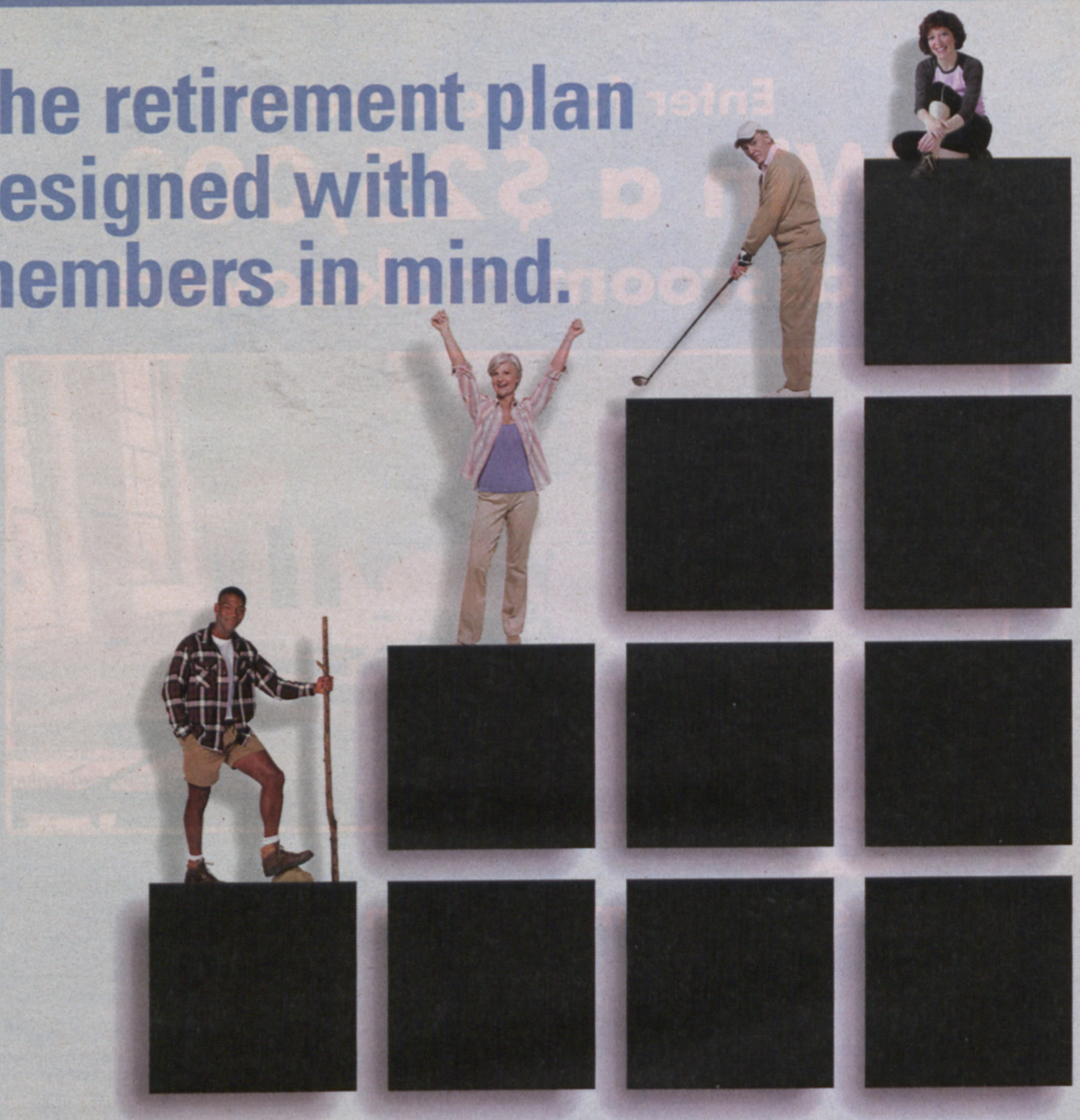

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VBNT0406

Second Time Around

A grandpa rediscovers the wonder of raising a bundle of joy—and runs into some problems.

Frank Miller was facing one of the worst nightmares a parent can imagine. His 24-year-old daughter, home on a visit, was lying on the couch, sick with heroin withdrawal pains, while her one-year-old daughter patted her face—a toddler trying to mother her own mother.

Frank, a school psychologist, and his wife, Coletta, a guidance counselor, took a stand. "We told our daughter she had a choice: either go into a rehabilitation program or we would take the child from her. Which is what we did."

So began a life adventure filled with the joys of bringing up a little girl, tempered by the pain of dealing with a grown daughter in crisis and the complications that come with a family arrangement very different from what's expected, but becoming much more common.

According to the 2000 census, 4.5 million children live in grandparent-headed households, up 30 percent since 1990. That's more than 6 percent of children under age 18, although in many cases, the parents are also in the household.

News stories about grandparents bringing up children usually focus on low-income, minority grandparents, but "that's the tip of the iceberg," says Miller. There are also non-minority, middle class grandparents in this situation—like him and his wife, who live in Denton, Maryland.

Poor or not poor, grandparents raising children need help and consideration from educators, Miller says. Instead, he adds, they often feel disapproved of. "Some people seem to feel, 'You screwed up the first time. What gives you the right to try again?' But grandparents are forced into this situation. They've done the right thing, and they deserve respect and support."

The grandchildren are likely to have extra problems caused by their difficult childhood experiences before the grandparents stepped in. The Millers' granddaughter spent a year in and out of foster care before her grandparents got custody, and she bears emotional scars, says Miller.

Grandparents may also have trouble getting medical insurance for a grandchild until they complete the adoption process, which for the Millers took until this past November.

Then there's the problem that grandparents may be unable to understand the lives of modern children. "My wife and I are educators, we're in schools every day, so we're in touch, but what if I were an engineer or a plumber? I'm 55, so I went to elementary school in the 1950s. There are grandparents in this situation in their 60s, who went to school in the 40s. A lot has changed.

"They may need to learn how special education works, how to help with homework, what's No Child Left Behind?" Miller says.

There are social expectations as well—What's normal for an eight- or 12-year-old these days? "When the child comes home and says, 'Everybody's doing it,' is it okay, or do I need to say, 'No.'"

Grandparent-parents may also suffer social isolation. "A lot of our friends shunned us," says Miller. "They don't invite us to social gatherings because they don't want a five-year-old around."

"I'LL BE 66 when she's in high school. But I have no regrets. I love this girl to death."

—FRANK MILLER

At the same time, he says, the parents of his granddaughter's little friends don't really want to see them socially, either. "They don't invite us old coots. They don't think about us for play dates or birthday parties."

The Millers are perhaps even more dedicated to their little girl than most parents because, whether it's rational or not, they do feel that guilt, Miller explains. This time, they're determined to do everything right.

So instead of empty nest freedom, their lives are filled with soccer practice, dance lessons, and hundreds of bedtime stories.

"I was getting ready to retire," says Frank, "but now I'm starting over. I'll be 66 when she's in high school.

"But I have no regrets. I love this girl to death. It's been 20 years since I've heard a little voice, chased a little girl around the house, and put her on my shoulders. Fortunately, I'm in pretty good health, but I've started working out and lifting weights so I can keep up with her."

For other grandparents raising grandchildren, Miller recommends checking out the Web site of Grandparents United Delaware, at www.grandparentsunitedde.org, which has links to other useful sites.

—ALAIN JEHLEN

PHOTO: CHARLES VOTAW

Heat, Bugs, and Bullets

Those are the biggest challenges facing education support professionals who serve as Army Reservists in Iraq, they say.

"They had a whole lot of different ugly bugs with furry legs that would crawl inside your clothes and bite you all over," says Staff Sgt. James Smith, a school bus driver with the Clark County School District in Las Vegas. "And it was hot—about 150 degrees inside the cab of my truck."

Smith is one of hundreds of education support professionals (ESPs) who have traded their school wardrobes for sand-colored combat fatigues. As members of the Reserves and National Guard, ESPs from across the country are part of the largest military call-up in the last 30 years.

"When our country calls, ESPs respond," says Karen Mahurin, president of the National Council of ESPs. "It's hard for them, having to leave their families and jobs. But they don't hesitate to defend America and everything we stand for."

WHEN DUTY CALLS

As a member of the Army Reserve's 257th Transportation Company, Smith drove a 72-ton Heavy Equipment Transporter with a goose-neck trailer. He hauled tanks, various fighting vehicles, and soldiers from one battlefield to another.

"We would drive 14 hours a day and spend a week or more at a time in a combat zone," Smith says.

Among the 253 soldiers in the company was Spc. Kimberley Potter, also a Clark County school bus driver. As a field mechanic, Potter was often in the same 30-truck convoy—dubbed "Rolling Thunder"—as Smith. She and the 29 other women in the unit endured the same sand fleas, camel spiders, and battle conditions as the men.

"In the desert, there are no showers," she says, "We had to sit through sand storms and clean ourselves with baby wipes."

The company spent 346 days in Kuwait and Iraq, from February 2003 to March 2004. As a unit they drove more than 2 million miles between home base in Kuwait and hot spots like the Sunni Triangle.

Although Smith was thousands of miles from Las Vegas, he found that his experience at the wheel of a bus helped him on those long drives along the Iraqi countryside.

"The truck was harder to handle, being three times as big as my school bus," he says. "But I was used to driving in a high state of alertness because at school you have to constantly keep your eyes moving from the traffic on both sides of the bus back to the kids in the rear."

ROAD WARRIORS

Aside from IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and other road mines, Smith and Potter had to beware suicide attacks from pedestrians and other vehicles.

"Cars would come up beside you and start shooting, or kids would run up to the truck and try to throw a grenade in the cab," Smith says. "'Stay alert, stay alive' was my motto."

Because of the weight of the vehicles and their loads, the convoy didn't travel faster than 45 miles per hour. In one instance, the slow speed helped Smith evade a pile-up when a truck in front of his hit a roadside bomb.

"The force of the explosion blew out my windows," he says. "After that, I was always praying."

On missions that would last up to 12 days, Potter carried an M-16 rifle on her shoulder and a 50-caliber weapon in her Humvee. She and the other mechanics brought up the rear of the convoy as gunner support.

"In Mosul, we encountered enemy fire, but there was little I could do except continue driving," she says. "In other places people would sometimes shout at us and slide their index finger across their throat."

HISTORIC PROPORTIONS OF POVERTY

But for other uniformed ESPs, it wasn't the specific danger that they experienced, but the poverty suffered by local people that

PHOTO: COURTESY OF KENNY HAM

Staff Sgt. Kenny Ham, left, **Spc. Kimberley Potter,** above, and **Staff Sgt. James Smith,** right, are ESPs who serve in the National Guard and Army Reserves. After a long deployment to the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, these citizen soldiers returned to their school districts and picked up where they left off.

struck them most. Staff Sgt. Kenny Ham, who was deployed in February 2003 to Camp Udari, Kuwait, also took part in several humanitarian missions to Afghani villages in Kandahar. On one assignment, members of his company delivered food, clothing, books, toys, and medical supplies to a poor mountain village.

"People came running out of their homes—which were mud huts made with straw," he says. "As word spread, more and more people came on foot, by camel and donkey. It was chilly, and the kids were barefoot, wearing a single layer of clothing. Their little hands were chapped and weathered."

The village lacked telephones, television, and radio. "[Afghanistan] is so far behind the modern world, it is beyond belief," says Ham, who also flew combat missions as a door gunner during his 14 months in the Middle East.

ON THE HOMEFRONT

Back home, Ham is an assistant fleet mechanic in operations and maintenance with a three-county BOCES (Board of Cooperative Education Services) in Elmira, New York. Though he lives in New York, he has served 17 years with the 104th Airborne Division of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard.

"I joined the Pennsylvania Guard because I wanted to be in an aviation unit," says Ham, who reports to Fort Indiantown Gap, a three-and-a-half hour drive from his farm house in Pine City. "It was the nearest aviation unit."

Ham says he has no regrets about his deployment, especially since he received strong support from his school district.

"Two of my co-workers split their shifts to fill in and keep the fleet in good running order," he says.

None of the three ESPs lost seniority or were penalized during their service in Operation Iraqi Freedom. While they were not paid by the school district during their tours, each received full pay and benefits as active duty military. Smith and Potter say they also received encouragement and advice from Sam Johnson, a UniServ director with the Nevada State Education Association (NSEA).

"It's a federal law that citizen soldiers have to be excused from work without penalty," Johnson says. "But we also have it written in our bargaining contract."

Johnson, who served 23 years in the Air Force, says his military experience helped him negotiate some extra protection for local ESPs.

Having Association support was a relief to the ESPs, especially because of other concerns—including their young children.

"Without hesitation, I missed my son the most," says Ham, whose son turned seven during his deployment. When Potter left, her son was age three and her daughter was one.

"I left active duty after my son was born," she says. "I wanted to ensure more time with my family while not giving up my military career."

Smith's wife, who was pregnant when he left for the Middle East, introduced her husband to their eight-month-old son.

"I appreciate life more since coming home," Smith says. "I now thank God every day for having a family, a job, and my freedom." nea

—JOHN ROSALES

More ESP stories in this issue:

> Virginia ESPs launch living wage campaign – *Page 13*
> Arizona bargaining team wins gains for ESPs – *Page 18*
> Food service professionals embrace new tech – *Page 34*

PHOTO TOP: COURTESY OF KIMBERLEY POTTER; BOTTOM RIGHT: KEVIN CANNON

RATING NCLB

NEA MEMBERS SAY IT'S HURTING MORE THAN HELPING.

"NCLB is great in theory. All of us would love to have 100 percent proficiency by 2014. But that's about as far as it's great. In Title I schools, we're losing good teachers. A lot of people are starting to teach to the test, which is awful. The things that we did that made us stand out as teachers are being taken away. Everything is test, test, test."

—JESSICA COOK, THIRD-GRADE TEACHER, ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

EDITED BY ALAIN JEHLEN

IT HAS ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE NAMES EVER GIVEN TO A LAW. IT PASSED AMID HIGH BIPARTISAN HOPES OF CLOSING THE WIDE ACHIEVEMENT GAPS THAT DIVIDE AMERICAN CHILDREN. AND AT FOUR YEARS OLD, IT NOW HAS A TRACK RECORD.

That's "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB), the current incarnation of the 40-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

NCLB touches virtually every school in the country. Each year the impact grows—and so does a new bipartisan consensus that the law is hurting more than helping efforts to close achievement gaps.

Nobody knows the law's effects on children better than NEA members, so this month, we hear from the experts—that's you—about both the good and the bad.

This is not idle talk. NEA lobbyists and organizers are working to radically overhaul the law when it comes up for reauthorization in 2007. Congress may start work on changes this year. And educators can make a difference—if they speak up.

To plan the Association's effort, NEA President Reg Weaver last June appointed an ESEA advisory committee led by Executive Committee member Becky Pringle. They're holding hearings with members across the country to come up with proposals, rooted in classroom experience, for changing NCLB into a law that would really help achieve the goal of a great public school for every child.

Armed with these proposals, NEA will intensify its campaign to get Congress to listen to the nation's working educators.

"We're not talking about tinkering around the edges," says Pringle. "We are putting together the ideas of NEA members for how the federal government can help us do our work. It's essential that members get involved if we are to be successful in making the changes that we and our students need in this legislation, which is the most intrusive education law ever to come out of Washington."

As NEA revs up its push to transform the law, see what some of your colleagues have to say about what NCLB means in their classrooms.

4 WAYS IT CAN HELP

"Every child can learn"

Originally, NCLB was supposed to ensure high standards for all children and send the message that no one should give up on students who don't do well in school. That message mostly got sidetracked by the focus on sanctions. But one school that took the message to heart is Rapid City Central High School, the largest high school in South Dakota. It's a place that has often intimidated American Indian students, especially those coming from intimate tribal schools. In 2001, the school had 300 American Indian ninth-graders—but only 44 eventually graduated.

American Indian and special education students at Central failed to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) in math and reading, and that got the attention of school leaders, says Robert Cook, who joined the staff of about 100 as its only American Indian teacher three years ago. Cook teaches in the school's new program for at-risk teens, Lakolkiciyapi (Lakota for "an alliance of people working together"), a school-within-a-school that integrates native culture into the curriculum.

"If they feel a sense of belonging, they'll look at school as a safe place to be," says Cook of these students. "We can't teach kids if they don't come to school."

So far, so good—last year, Central's native students achieved AYP in reading and math, and a record number of them graduated.

Cook

A BETTER DEAL FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

Buried inside NCLB are clauses that strengthen the 1988 McKinney-Vento law on educating homeless children. Schools must now enroll homeless students immediately, without waiting for records from previous schools. And these students are entitled to stay at the same school even if they move.

One of counselor Rose Mathews' students at Hunters Lane High School in Nashville feared that if he told anybody his dad had kicked him out, the school would, too. The student lived in his car and then at the Salvation Army before confiding in Mathews.

"Before, it would have been, 'You can go down the road to the school you're [now] zoned for,'" says Mathews. But under the new law, she explains, this student was able to stay at Hunters Lane. "It has made us more aware and put us on alert."

A Brief History of NCLB

(GO TO **www.neatoday.org** FOR SOURCES AND MORE EXPLANATION)

JANUARY 2002

President Bush signs the "No Child Left Behind Act" into law.

AUGUST 2002

USA Today finds 18 exemplary schools that won the coveted U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon but are also subject to federal punishment for failing to make "adequate yearly progress" (AYP).

SEPTEMBER 2003

The Orleans Southwest district in Vermont decides not to apply for Title I money for secondary grades to avoid expensive punitive measures for a high school that didn't make AYP. Two other districts follow suit, along with three in Connecticut.

PHOTOS LEFT: JEFF SCHULTZ; BOTTOM: IMAGE SOURCE; TIMELINE PHOTO: STEVE COLE; IMAGE TOP: MIKE WOLFORTH

USING DATA TO IMPROVE TEACHING

Too much testing can get in the way of learning, but good tests, well used, can be powerful tools. The results they yield can guide teachers in boosting students to a higher level.

It's all about the data in Deborah Gore's second-grade classroom in San Bernardino County, California. Her students sharpen their pencils for monthly reading and math assessments. Then the results drive Gore's instruction. When diagnostic reports show weaknesses in vocabulary, "we talk about words, label them, use them," Gore says. She also shares data with parents, pointing out ways they can help at home.

Two years ago, her school failed to make AYP, scoring last of 22 schools in its district. But last year, the school soared to sixth.

"Isn't that awesome?" Gore exclaims. "This really pays off."

GROUP SCORES CAN PINPOINT PROBLEMS

On the surface, Calusa Elementary School in tony Boca Raton, Florida, looks highly successful. For the last three years, Calusa has earned an A-ranking from the state based on the scores of its mostly White and affluent students. But there's a problem at Calusa. Many of the school's low-income students, more than two-thirds of them Black and Hispanic, do poorly on achievement tests. Their lagging scores used to stay hidden among the piles of answer sheets from more affluent students, but under NCLB, each group's test results are reported separately. Many NEA members say the separate reporting is helpful when it's used to point up problems, not to punish educators.

"Disaggregating the data drives our instruction," says Calusa Elementary third-grade teacher Deborah Fox. "We're able to prioritize these students' needs."

Teachers help craft academic programs to meet the needs of students who score low. "When the results come back at the end of the year and you see these students who had a hard time succeed, that's very rewarding," Fox says.

9 WAYS IT HURTS

Testing crowds out learning

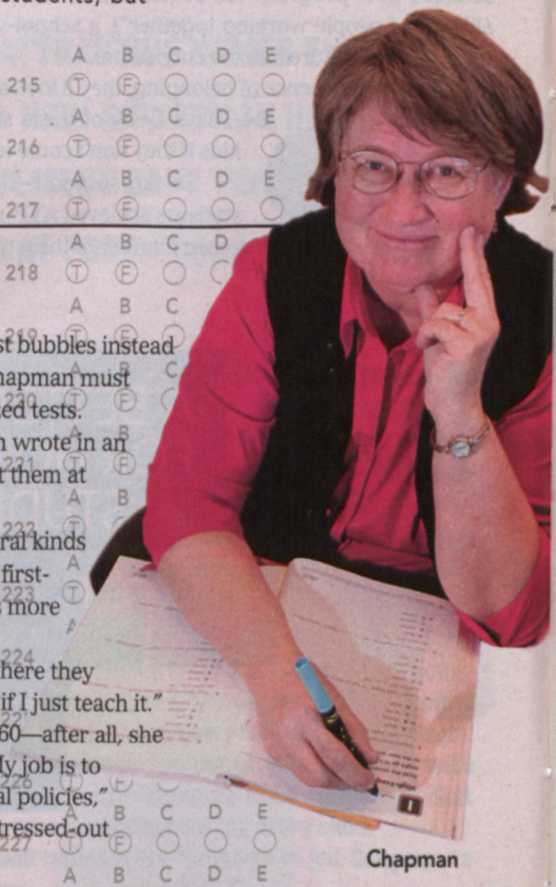
Wish you had a dollar for every hour one of your students spends filling in test bubbles instead of experimenting with magnets or reading the latest Junie B. book? Cheryl Chapman must give her second-graders in DuPage County, Illinois, a constant stream of standardized tests.

"I give them a week's worth of tests every six weeks in language arts," Chapman wrote in an e-mail. "Our lit program is so highly scripted, a second-grader could teach it. I've let them at times. I use it because I have to, but I supplement like crazy."

Chapman administers another language arts test three times per year, plus several kinds of math tests. "All kids are supposed to graph their progress on the computer, even first-graders," says Chapman. "Our administrators think the graphing will make the kids more motivated, but I haven't seen the research to support this. It's just a big stress-out."

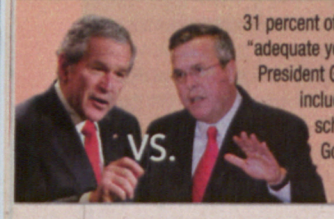
The results are supposed to provide insight into what kids have mastered and where they need help, but Chapman says they don't add "any information I don't already know if I just teach it."

Recently, Chapman's husband asked her why she planned to retire early, at age 60—after all, she loves teaching. She answered that she no longer sees what she does as teaching. "My job is to protect my students from the local repercussions of this Administration's educational policies," she says. "I wish Americans would wake up and see that these policies create little stressed-out robots, not thinking, creative, smart kids."



Chapman

FALL 2003



31 percent of the nation's schools fail to make "adequate yearly progress" according to President George W. Bush's NCLB rules. They include 78 percent of the Florida schools rated "A" by his brother, Governor Jeb Bush.

DECEMBER 2003

The Department of Education makes the first of several AYP rule changes, loosening the requirements a bit to make it easier for schools to pass.

JANUARY 2004

Virginia House of Delegates votes 98-1 to ask Congress to exempt their state from the rules of NCLB.

Idaho Senate votes unanimously to ask Congress to change NCLB. "Idahoans have a sensitivity to federal intrusion," says the education committee chair.

Time magazine says 20 states are rebelling against NCLB.

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

NCLB applies blanket rules to all students and all situations—a one-size-fits-all approach. NEA members know that doesn't work.

One glaring example is the requirement that special education children meet the same standards as children with no disabilities. More schools fail to meet AYP because of low scores for special education students than any other group.

Recognizing this problem in the law, federal officials first arbitrarily decided that 1 percent of students would be allowed to meet more appropriate standards. Later, they added another 2 percent. But that's not nearly enough, say special educators like middle school teacher Tracy Keuler of Salem, Oregon.

"In our special education classes, we have slow learners with low IQs and other learning disabilities. Special education gives them their best chance to achieve even the smallest academic gains. It's a slow, often frustrating process. How can they be expected to pass the same tests as other students? I am so tired of hearing the entire building's scores were brought down because my kids didn't pass!" Keuler laments.

"What if the government decided physical disabilities could be eliminated through standards? What if there were a mandate that doctors must bring their patients to 'normal standards' and all patients must be able to walk? The government does not seem to believe that our students' disabilities are real," she adds.

"NCLB tells kids that there is something wrong with them if they don't meet the 'standards.' Kids who have true disabilities should be applauded for what they do, not made to feel worse."

EDUCATORS GET BLAMED FOR PROBLEMS THEY CAN'T CONTROL

In its mandated punishments for schools where students score low, NCLB seems to assume that educators can just shove America's deep social problems—poverty, racism, drugs, crime, and the rest—right out the classroom door. Students must pass the same tests regardless of whether they lead lives of privilege or despair. But educators know the outside world is always in their classrooms, sitting with each student.

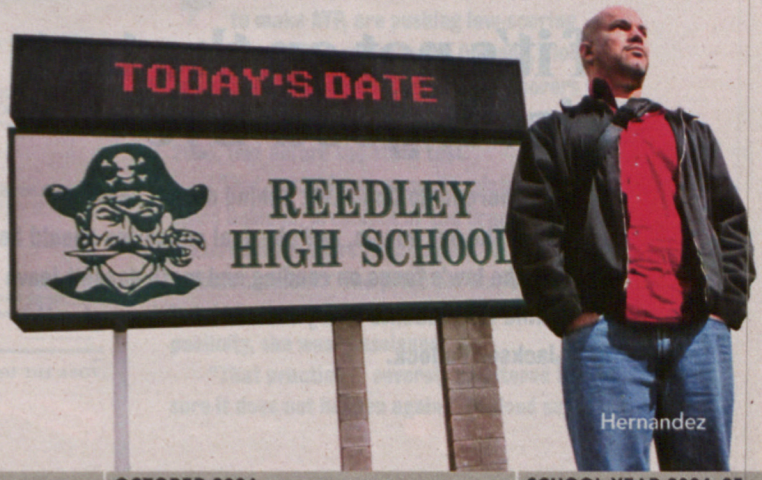
Oscar Hernandez teaches language arts to at-risk teens at Reedley High School near Fresno, California, in a rural, low-income area where many children speak Spanish at home.

"Many of these kids come in with no dreams. They think, 'This is my life.' Some of them are into gang membership and drugs," he says.

Hernandez and his colleagues work to make the academics relevant. They focus on critical thinking rather than test prep, because "what they need to learn for life is different from what they need to pass the tests."

Right now, he's teaching a unit about gangs and "the kids are eating it up. They can't put down the books. They're totally engaged." Last year, he connected just as powerfully with a unit on migrant labor.

Can these students reach high levels of academic achievement? Yes, they can, Hernandez insists, but the state test won't show it—and the school will be labeled "failing"—because many of the questions are so divorced from their world.



FEBRUARY 2004

U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige calls NEA a "terrorist organization" because of its efforts to change NCLB.

SPRING 2004

California Department of Education study predicts 99 percent of schools will fail AYP by 2014.

FAIL

OCTOBER 2004

NEA-led coalition of 27 education, civil rights, religious, and other organizations issues a proposal for fixing NCLB to help children learn (see "A Growing Chorus for Common Sense" on page 30).

SCHOOL YEAR 2004–05

States are required to raise standards for AYP, making it harder for schools to pass.

PHOTOS TOP LEFT: CALVIN KNIGHT; BOTTOM LEFT: DAVID BARNES; TOP RIGHT: RYAN MCVAY; BOTTOM RIGHT: ERIC PAUL ZAMORA; TIMELINE PHOTOS LEFT TO RIGHT: CORBIS, GARY S. CHAPMAN

MORE TEACHING TO THE TEST, LESS TEACHING FOR UNDERSTANDING

The single-minded focus on test scores as the only measure of a school's success forces educators to concentrate their time and effort on raising those scores. Teachers know that's no way to educate children.

Lilia Olivas teaches a bilingual fifth grade in Tucson, Arizona. She turned a Valentine's Day party into a math lesson: If each student gives every other student a valentine, how many is that? The session was videotaped for a nationally distributed library of exemplary lessons. But these days, it's getting harder for her to carve out time for creative lessons because she has so many topics to cover for the all-important test. "Kids are judged by a number, not by what they understand," she says. Even if they know how to find a test answer, many can't apply what they've learned in new situations because they didn't understand it in the first place. The result: "Many of our students are getting turned off by math. They try to get into fields without math, especially minority kids."

Theel

If it's not on the test, kiss it good-bye

Nowhere in No Child Left Behind does it say that programs like art, music, and physical education should be cut. But the law's focus on reading and math doesn't leave much time for students to try their hand at becoming the next Jackson Pollock.

"Art is your soul," says art teacher Mollie Theel in Rochester, Minnesota, where middle school students used to get nearly 50 minutes of art daily. Budget slashing in the 1990s began consigning art to a death of a thousand cuts, but NCLB delivered a body blow, because art is not on the test, and therefore not a priority.

Now, sixth-graders in Rochester get half as much art as before, eighth-graders get only one semester, and seventh-graders get nothing.

"I understand about math and reading," says Theel. "I just want fair time and respect. Art is not fluff. We teach kids how to see in new ways. We touch the senses." Theel has always helped students connect their creative art lessons to their other subjects. "A lot of what I do is applied math—proportion and ratio, scale and measuring."

Art teachers feel more than a little undervalued in the era of NCLB, Theel says. "We get, 'How nice. What pretty pictures.' People have no clue what goes into pretty pictures." And each year, it seems to get worse. "I have some very bright kids and I know that when they get to high school, chances are they will not get to take art."

FALL 2004

24 percent of American schools fail to make AYP. In Florida, that includes 827 out of 1,262 schools awarded the coveted "A" rating by the state.

JANUARY 2005

The White House pays a popular television personality $240,000 to promote NCLB on his nationally syndicated television show.

FEBRUARY 2005

Texas Education Commissioner Shirley Neeley defies the federal rule requiring most special education students to meet the same standards on the same test as students with no disabilities, making Texas the first state to openly defy an NCLB mandate. Governor Rick Perry backs her up.

IMPOSSIBLE MANDATES

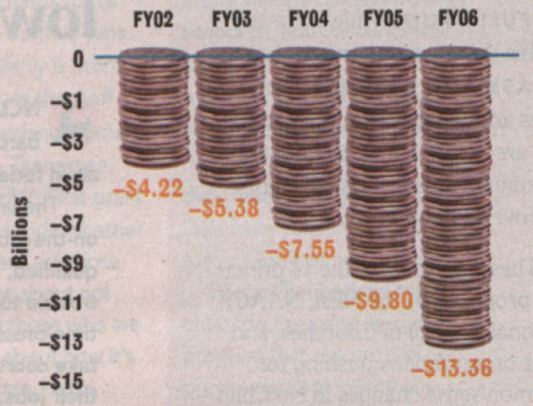
What's "proficient?" Under NCLB, the state decides, but because the law requires that every student be "proficient" by 2014, it should be a level that any student, if taught well, can attain. Study after study concludes that with the levels states have set, almost every school will fail to reach 100 percent proficiency by the deadline.

Some states have defined "proficient" to be so advanced that even successful adults can't measure up. Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle had her senior policy advisors take her state's fifth-grade math test. They failed. So Lingle thinks the standard is unrealistic. "No matter how much effort we put in," she says, "more and more students will fail."

Not enough money to improve learning

NCLB promised big increases in aid to high-poverty schools, but the promises have been broken. This chart shows the growing gap between the promised amounts and actual funding.

The cumulative FY02–FY06 gap between NCLB authorizations and appropriations totals $40.3 billion.

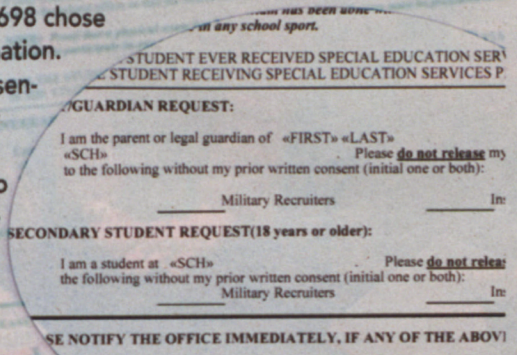


SOURCE: NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, DECEMBER 2005

MILITARY ACCESS —'OPT OUT' VS. 'OPT IN'

School districts receiving NCLB money are required to give student information to military recruiters. But parents and students can "opt out" by asking that their personal information not be released. To help them, Portland, Maine, schools added this option to student emergency forms. Of the 1,341 students at Deering High School this year, 698 chose not to release their information.

Last year's NEA Representative Assembly voted to propose that the law be changed from "opt out" to "opt in": No contact information would be released without student or parent approval. NEA is supporting a bill in Congress, H.R. 559, to make that change.



...in any school sport.

...STUDENT EVER RECEIVED SPECIAL EDUCATION SER...
...STUDENT RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES P...

...GUARDIAN REQUEST:

I am the parent or legal guardian of «FIRST» «LAST» «SCH» . Please do not release my to the following without my prior written consent (initial one or both):

_____ Military Recruiters _____ In...

SECONDARY STUDENT REQUEST(18 years or older):

I am a student at «SCH» . Please do not relea... the following without my prior written consent (initial one or both):

_____ Military Recruiters _____ In...

...SE NOTIFY THE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY, IF ANY OF THE ABOV...

SCHOOLS HAVE AN INCENTIVE TO PUSH OUT LOW-SCORING STUDENTS

Reports say that some schools, desperate to make AYP, are pushing low-scoring students out. One example: An Orlando, Florida, newspaper discovered that 126 low-scorers were dropped from the rolls of a local high school in 2003, just before the state test.

"That coincidence was unexplainable," says David DeMond, president of the Orange County Classroom Teachers Association. "It was an embarrassment." The principal denied dismissing students to boost scores, but after the bad publicity, she was reassigned.

"That practice is severely monitored to be sure it does not happen again," DeMond says.

APRIL 2005

nea several state affiliates, and nine school districts go to court to stop federal authorities from forcing districts to spend their own money on NCLB requirements.

MAY 2005

Utah rebuffs federal threats and orders school officials to ignore NCLB when it conflicts with Utah's own school accountability system.

JUNE 2005

Two Illinois school districts pass up Title I funding rather than submit to NCLB sanctions.

Massachusetts becomes the seventh state to project how many schools will fail AYP by 2014. The predictions range from 74 to 99 percent.

PHOTOS TOP LEFT: BETH SCHLANKER; TOP RIGHT: PHOTODISC; TIMELINE PHOTOS LEFT TO RIGHT: CORBIS, RANDY ALLBRITTON, GARY S. CHAPMAN

A GROWING CHORUS FOR COMMON SENSE

DON'T JUDGE schools only by their students' test scores. Instead, let states use multiple measures of success.

DON'T REQUIRE testing every single year between grades 3 and 8.

DO FULLY FUND Title I so every eligible child can be served.

DO ASK FOR REPORTS from states and school districts on what they are doing to help families and communities, as well as educators, improve student learning.

These are some of the 14 principles proposed by the NEA, NAACP, National Council of Churches, and other organizations pushing for common sense changes in No Child Left Behind to make the law live up to its lofty name.

The coalition, called the Forum on Educational Accountability, started as 27 organizations that presented their proposals in October 2004. More groups are signing on all the time—68 at last count.

Read the complete statement and list of signers online at www.neatoday.org.

3 THINGS THAT NEED WORK

Paras face high standards, low pay

NCLB sets very high education standards for instructional paraprofessionals in federal Title I programs.

The law allows districts to look at paras' on-the-job skill in deciding whether they're qualified, but many districts didn't take the trouble to do that. Instead, they forced many time-pressed and money-strapped paras to take courses or pass tests in order to keep their jobs.

"Can you imagine asking a 20-year veteran paraprofessional to take a test, and if they fail, they lose their job?" asks Stanhope, New Jersey, paraprofessional Elise Falleni. "NCLB has created a lot of fear and anxiety."

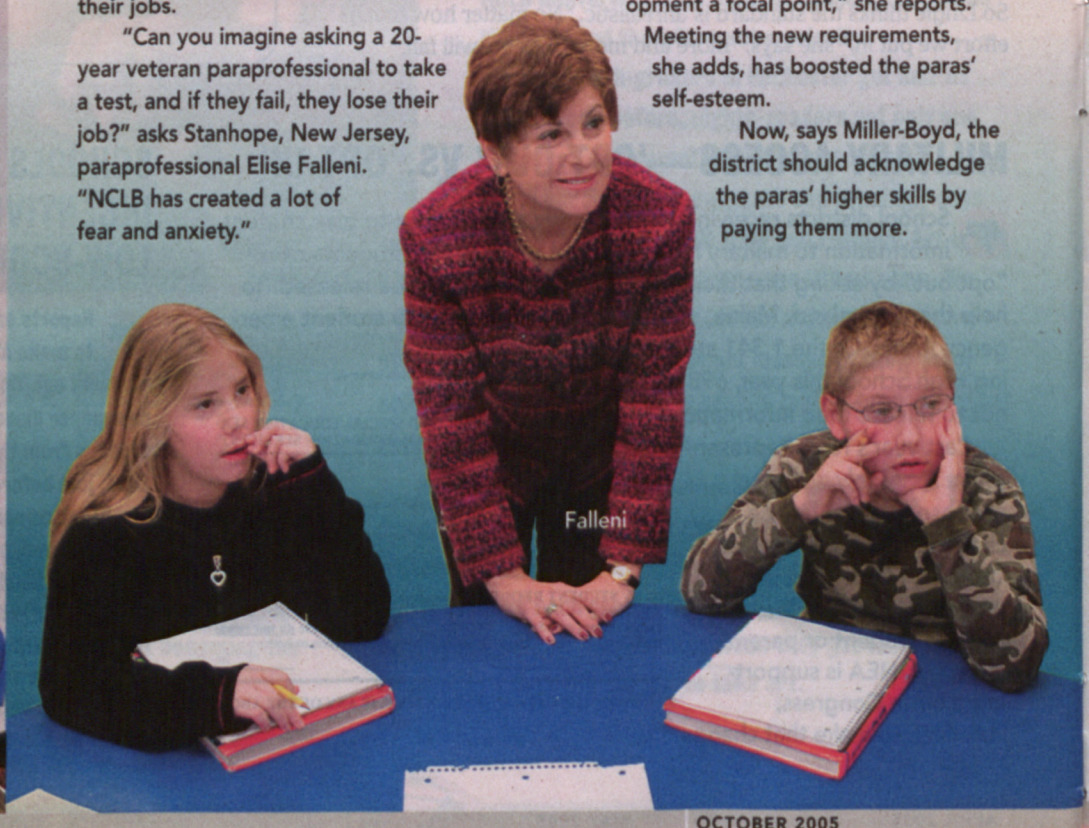
Falleni says New Jersey paras are being judged primarily through a test that does not consider work experience or knowledge of student behavior.

"The law doesn't measure the ways [paras] work with students who are disrupting the class, or who are hyper, autistic, or physically challenged," says Falleni.

She says many paras have second jobs and were unable to return to school to get an associate's degree, especially since most school districts didn't offer tuition assistance.

But Seattle para Yvonne Miller-Boyd had a better experience. District officials there worked together with the Seattle Education Association and "made professional development a focal point," she reports. Meeting the new requirements, she adds, has boosted the paras' self-esteem.

Now, says Miller-Boyd, the district should acknowledge the paras' higher skills by paying them more.



JULY 2005

The non-profit group Communities for Quality Education reports that leaders in 47 states have now called for NCLB changes.

AUGUST 2005

Virginia lawmakers demand more flexibility on NCLB. "We've talked until we're blue in the face with the U.S. Department of Education folks, but we haven't seen a lot of action," says the chair of the House Republican caucus.

Connecticut goes to federal court to preserve its student assessment system, which uses sophisticated tests every other year. Federal officials say the state should use cheaper, blunter tests and must test every year.

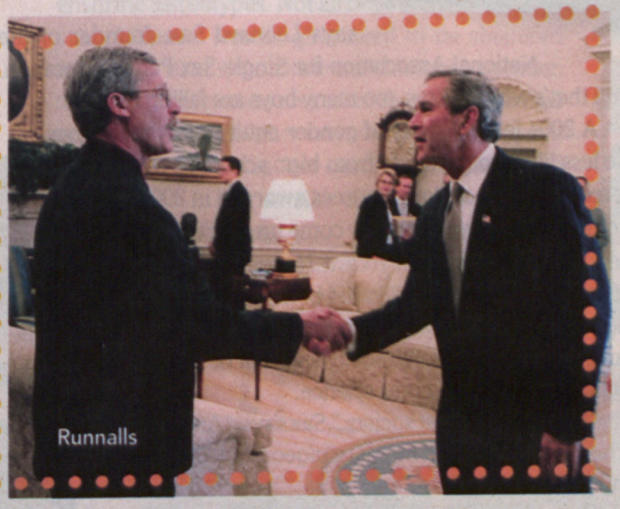
OCTOBER 2005

Newly released reading and math scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress—known as "The Nation's Report Card"—show NCLB has failed to improve basic skills. Reading scores, flat for many years, remain flat. Math scores, rising for many years, are now rising more slowly.

PHOTOS BOTTOM LEFT: DIGITAL VISION; BOTTOM CENTER: ERIKA GEHRINGER; BOTTOM RIGHT: IMAGE SOURCE; TIMELINE PHOTOS LEFT TO RIGHT: STOCKBYTE, ALAN PAPPE, IMAGE SOURCE

HE'S TEACHER OF THE YEAR, BUT NOT 'HIGHLY QUALIFIED'

Educators don't want unqualified people teaching, but who is "highly qualified"? That issue loomed large at the start of NCLB when thousands of veteran teachers were suddenly told their years of successful experience didn't matter and they'd have to go back to school or take a test to prove themselves. Although some big problems remain, NEA affiliates and state officials hammered out workable solutions for most situations.


Runnalls

But the case of Montana science teacher Jon Runnalls showed how far off the mark federal bureaucrats can be.

"In 2003, I was selected as Montana Teacher of the Year," he says, "but through the eyes of the people in Washington, D.C., I was unqualified!

"I teach general science at Helena Middle School. They felt that if I do plants, I should have a degree in botany. When I'm teaching kids about plate tectonics, I should have a degree in geology. To do a chemistry experiment, I need a degree in chemistry.

"We're all for highly qualified teachers," says Runnalls, "but there has to be some kind of flexibility. A one-room schoolhouse in Montana is not the same as a classroom in Chicago. We used to determine by ourselves who was highly qualified or not, but now we've lost that local control."

Fortunately, things are getting better, he says.

"We pushed for a combination of measurements in Montana—including an assessment by a supervising teacher and a Praxis-like subject test—to determine whether a teacher is highly qualified. So, I believe now I'm 'highly qualified.' That's kind of nice."

READING FIRST MONEY—WITH STRINGS ATTACHED

NCLB's Reading First program provides money for schools to improve reading among their K–3 students—and that's certainly a good thing. But federal officials have stirred up controversy by using their control over the funds to tell teachers how to do their jobs.

That controversy is prominently on display in the staff lounge of Cumberland Elementary in Nashville, Tennessee, which has a Reading First grant and is trying to decide whether to re-apply. "There are those who are adamant about not re-applying, and those who are just as adamant about how it's helped the children," says teacher Dorcel Benson.

Proponents say students are benefiting from the program's required daily dose of uninterrupted reading (that's 90 minutes of *Tales of a Fourth-Grade Nothing* and *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*). And they welcome the professional development that the grant money buys. But the mandates that come along with the benefits rankle others.

"We have to complete 90 hours of online development and keep folders tracking them, and someone comes into the school to monitor our hours," says Benson. She considers herself a house divided on this issue. But she doesn't like the rigid way Reading First chose their reading program for them. "We have very little input," she says. "Like it or not, we use it."

So at Cumberland they must use the same reading program that she used at her previous school, where she feels higher poverty rates and reading deficiencies made it more suitable. "We need more flexibility," Benson says.

1 STEP YOU CAN TAKE

A high-power, bipartisan national commission has begun considering changes in NCLB. It's vital that they hear from working educators. Help yourself and your students by going to www.neatoday.org, where NEA is collecting statements and stories to give the commission. You'll also find links to more information for the timeline events, a test-yourself quiz, a new Harvard NCLB study, and a discussion board where you can exchange views with other members.

FALL 2005
26 percent of the nation's schools are declared substandard by NCLB rules.

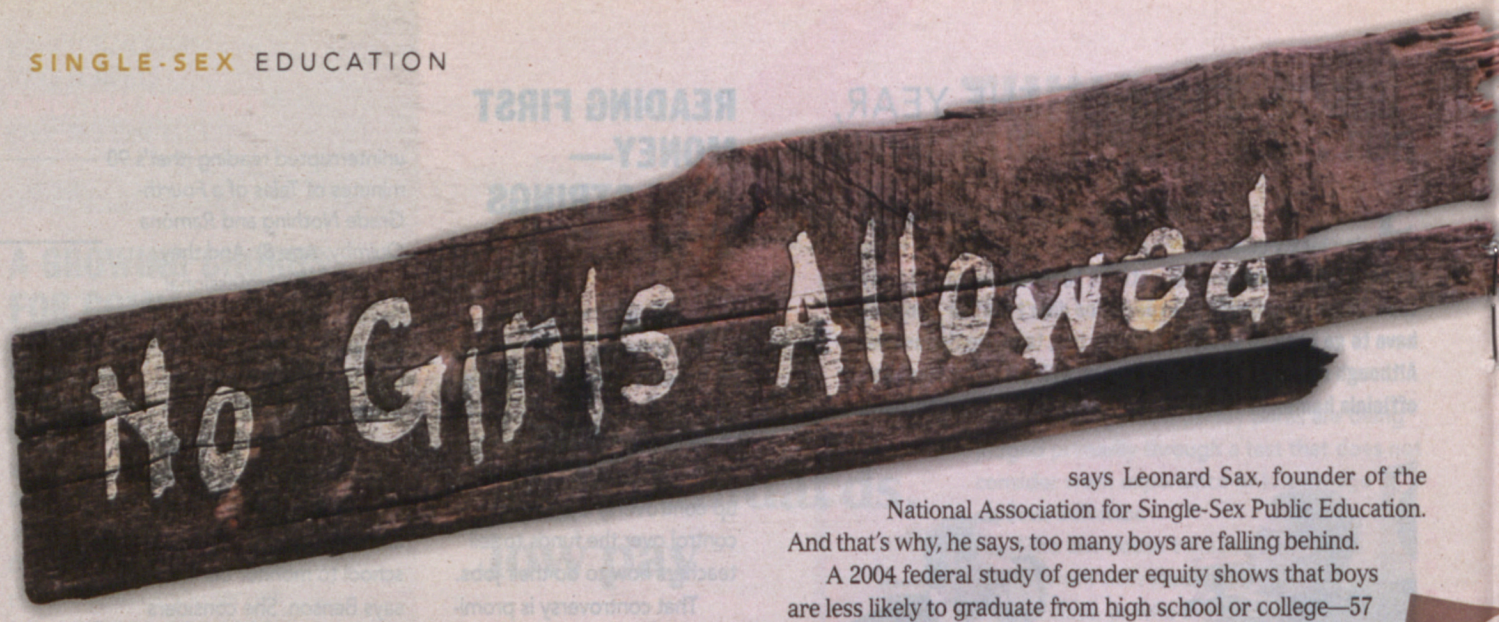
NOVEMBER 2005
NEA's NCLB lawsuit is rejected by a federal judge. NEA announces it will appeal.
NEA-led coalition to fix NCLB grows to 68 organizations.

DECEMBER 2005
"If, indeed, the road to hell is paved with good intentions, No Child Left Behind is educational asphalt," says *The Anniston Star* in Alabama.

JANUARY 2006
NCLB hits primetime in an episode of *Boston Legal* when the Michael J. Fox character says, "We treat our teachers like crap.... And the government in their 'No Child Left Behind' law have created a monster."

SEPTEMBER 2007
NCLB expires or (more likely) is reauthorized with changes.

>> **JUNE 2014**
According to NCLB, every child in America is "proficient."



Boys go here, girls go there, as across the country, schools embrace single-sex education in hopes of boosting achievement.

BY MARY ELLEN FLANNERY

The second-graders in Jeff Ferguson's classroom squiggle in their seats, knees up, arms splayed, faces animated. They spin their pencils, thrum their fingers, and shout out answers. (Score! Gimme five!) Some can't sit at all—they balance behind their desks on tippy-toes, poised to spring.

They're loud. They're rambunctious. They are, well, boys.

This classroom at the Walter C. Cunningham School of Excellence in Waterloo, Iowa, is among the latest to embrace single-sex education—the newly popular, but still controversial, practice of dividing a house so that each might stand straighter and achieve more. It is the hot thing these days: Boosted by money in the so-called No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) and recent changes to sex discrimination laws, the number of U.S. public schools with single-gender classrooms has soared from four in 1998 to 211 in 2006.

At Cunningham, the boys-only classroom is Ferguson's answer to the persistent under-achievement of Black boys in particular. If he can support their specific interests, and teach them in a way that fits their learning style, he hopes to close the gap. College for all of them, he says.

"Mr. Jackson, what are those first three letters," barks Ferguson during a reading lesson.

"C-A-N," reads a slim second-grader, wearing a navy Cunningham sweatshirt and a small, sparkling ear stud.

"What is it?" Ferguson demands again.

"C-A-N, can, candy!" shouts his student.

"All right!" Ferguson exclaims, beaming. "That's what I'm talking about! All you needed were the first three letters to identify that word, and why is that?"

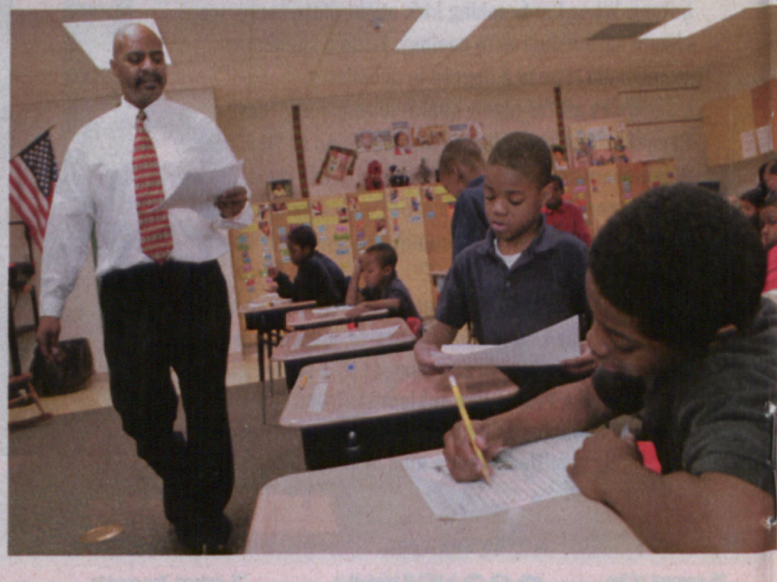
"Because we're smart!" boasts a classmate.

General expectations in most classrooms, that students will raise their hands, work cooperatively, ask for help, and refrain from disruption, are easier for most girls than boys to meet, says Leonard Sax, founder of the National Association for Single-Sex Public Education. And that's why, he says, too many boys are falling behind.

A 2004 federal study of gender equity shows that boys are less likely to graduate from high school or college—57 percent of all bachelor's degrees awarded in 2002 went to women. And they frequently come up short on standardized tests. On the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress, girls did better than boys in reading, and performed about the same in math. But at the same time, girls remain mostly shut out of certain subjects, especially computer science.

"We live in a sexist society," Sax says. "And in co-ed schools, our girls and boys are pigeon-holed into blue and pink cubbyholes."

Sax suggests girls would be free to start working toward that Nobel Prize in Physics if they studied in a more supportive, esteem-building environment. And boys will flourish alone, as well, he says. Check out Woodward Elementary in DeLand, Florida. In co-ed classes, 37 percent of boys passed a state writing test in 2005. But in all-boy classes? 86 percent.

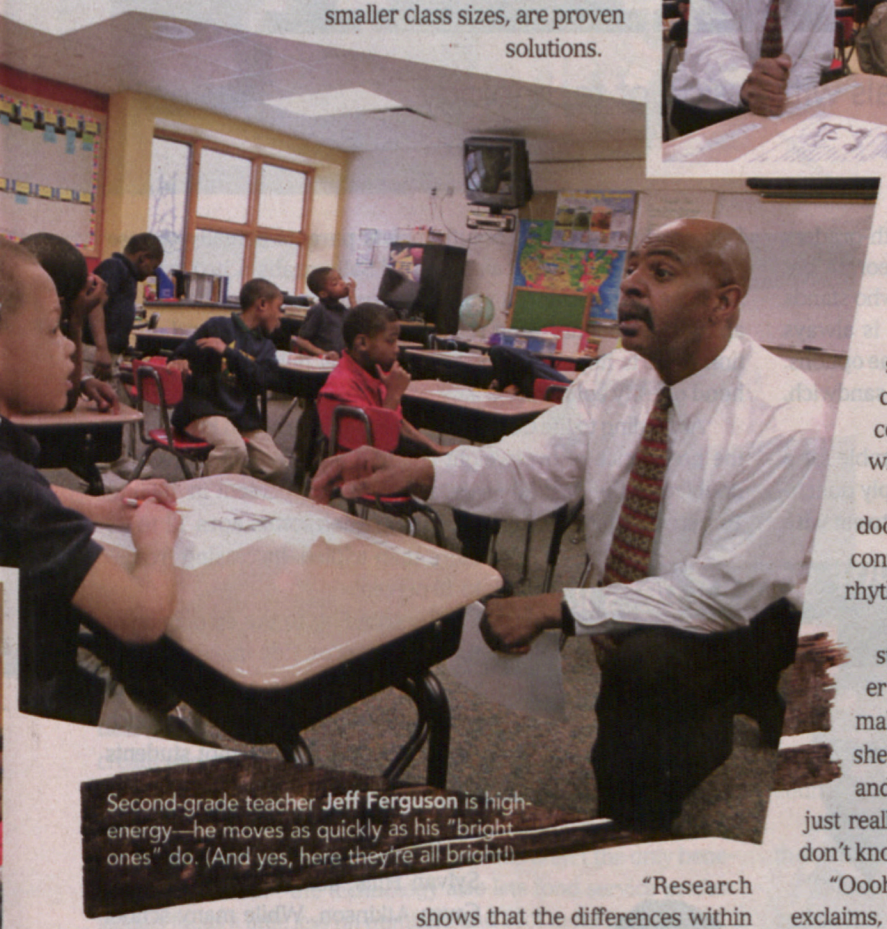


In a Phi Delta Kappa analysis of recent research on single-sex education, researchers agreed—at least in part. Their review concluded that single-sex classrooms might be a particularly good fit for minority, low-income students, who often lack academic and social supports at home. And, especially in secondary school, they may prevent kids from dropping out.

But it may not work for everybody, cautions Pamela Rios, a senior policy analyst in NEA Human and Civil Rights. "We're not saying it can't work, but we are saying there's not enough research to support putting this kind of program into widespread use for everyone. The verdict is still out."

EDUCATION EQUALITY

Concerns include the possibility that single-sex programs may enshrine stereotypes. Not all boys are disruptive, rambunctious, school-haters. Not all girls need to be sheltered from boys. And, if we divide our children by gender, it may set a dangerous precedent for divisions based on race or religion. Other ways to close achievement gaps, such as teacher-quality initiatives and smaller class sizes, are proven solutions.



Second-grade teacher **Jeff Ferguson** is high-energy—he moves as quickly as his "bright ones" do. (And yes, here they're all bright!)

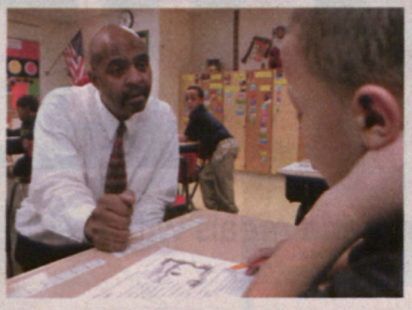
"Research shows that the differences within a sex are much bigger than the differences between sexes. Assuming that all boys like war games and all girls like dolls is a very big assumption," says American University professor David Sadker. "You have to ask, why is this so suddenly popular? It's because we're resegregating our schools—by race, by economics, and now, by boys and girls."

Sax concedes there are plenty of same-sex classrooms that have failed. But the problem, he says, is that too many teachers aren't provided with appropriate training, or they're forced into making a switch that they're not particularly excited about. To be successful, teachers need both a choice and training; and they also need a natural empathy for one gender style or the other.

"A talented teacher of girls will put aside everything when a girl comes to her to complain about some slight at the cafeteria table, and look her in the eye and say, 'Talk to me,'" Sax says. "And she will mean it. She really does care about the whole girl, and not just her grade in biology."

A talented teacher of boys, on the other hand, can roar. (Really roar—boys respond to louder instruction, Sax says.) And juggle. "Picture a guy on a cell phone; he's moving. He thinks better when he's moving," Ferguson says.

Use that boy-energy, urges Annette Duncan, Ferguson's colleague. In her all-boys classroom, a spelling lesson might require them to catch a ball and dash to her desk. She also capitalizes on their real-life interests—a lesson on news-writing opens up the sports pages.



"My boys are impulsive," Ferguson says. "Do I want to take advantage of that? Or squelch it and put it in a box? I'd say 60 to 70 percent of the time, they don't have to raise their hands. Just come on with it. It makes them want to answer, to take a risk."

LEARNING GAMES

At Iowa's Cunningham school, there are three single-sex classrooms: Ferguson's second grade, and two complementary rooms in the third grade. There also are co-ed classes. Parents choose their preference, often with the principal's recommendation.

Walking between them is like opening the refrigerator door. Even the air seems different. Here, it's calm. There it's controlled chaos. Here, it's quiet. Next door, the pulsating rhythms of Dr. Dre (without the lyrics) play softly.

In Amy Schmidt's all-girl class, she and a handful of students are clustered in a corner, reading about weather systems. A lightning streak across the book's cover makes "Miss Armoney" think of one word: "Suffocating," she tells her teacher. "Because if you're like in a hurricane, and the water is coming and the winds are coming, you're just really, really scared, like you can't even breathe, and you don't know if you can feed your children or anything!"

"Oooh! Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful answer!" Schmidt exclaims, kissing her fingers and touching Armoney's head. "I like your thinking, honey!"

They do not miss the boys. "Miss boys? Oh no!" Armoney cries, shaking her head firmly. "One chased me today at recess. Tried to kiss me. Oh no, we will never have boys in our class.

"Our class is a truthful class," she continues. "We respect one another and we care for one another. If anybody fell, we would help them up. And it doesn't matter if we mess up or not, Ms. Schmidt loves and cherishes us."

And she does, Schmidt says—much like Ferguson loves "his gentlemen." But she also loves having them to herself. Teaching two genders in one classroom is almost like teaching two grades in one room, Schmidt says. Knowing the difference, say both Schmidt and Duncan, they'd never go back. nea

PHOTOS: MARK TADE/GAZETTE COMMUNICATIONS

Digital Dining

Serving up healthy cafeteria meals with a side of technology

BY CINDY LONG

At 11:20 a.m., lunchtime comes early for sixth-graders at Sylvan Hills Middle School in Atlanta, Georgia, but Michael Robinson, a star football player who stands about a foot taller than his classmates, is always ready to eat. Moving through the line, Michael scans the options. Soft-spoken and a little shy, he quietly orders a chicken sandwich, a side of peas, chocolate milk, and Jell-O for dessert.

When he gets to the register, Michael doesn't fumble for a wallet or pull crumpled bills from his pocket. He simply punches his personal code into a keypad, and is on his way to eat with his friends.

Gone are the days when kids had to worry about lost or stolen lunch money, and when parents had to wonder whether that money was spent on a healthy meal or squandered on candy, a favorite comic book, or worse. Electronic lunch prepayment systems have become the trend du jour in America's increasingly digital dining halls, making it easy for parents to rest assured that their kids buy lunch every day.

Atlanta public schools use an electronic lunch payment system called Mealpay.com, which not only lets parents prepay online for their children's lunches, but also allows them to check out what their kids are eating. Parents can log onto the Web site with a password, enter the student's ID number, and pull up a page listing what their child purchased in the cafeteria—the entrée or junk food from the à la carte menu. In Houston public schools, Primero Food Service Solutions lets parents actually choose what items their kids can select. If Sally grabs a brownie, or Jimmy a bag of chips, a warning sounds, notifying the cashier about the students' food restrictions. School health and nutrition experts hope these technologies will help curb the childhood obesity epidemic.

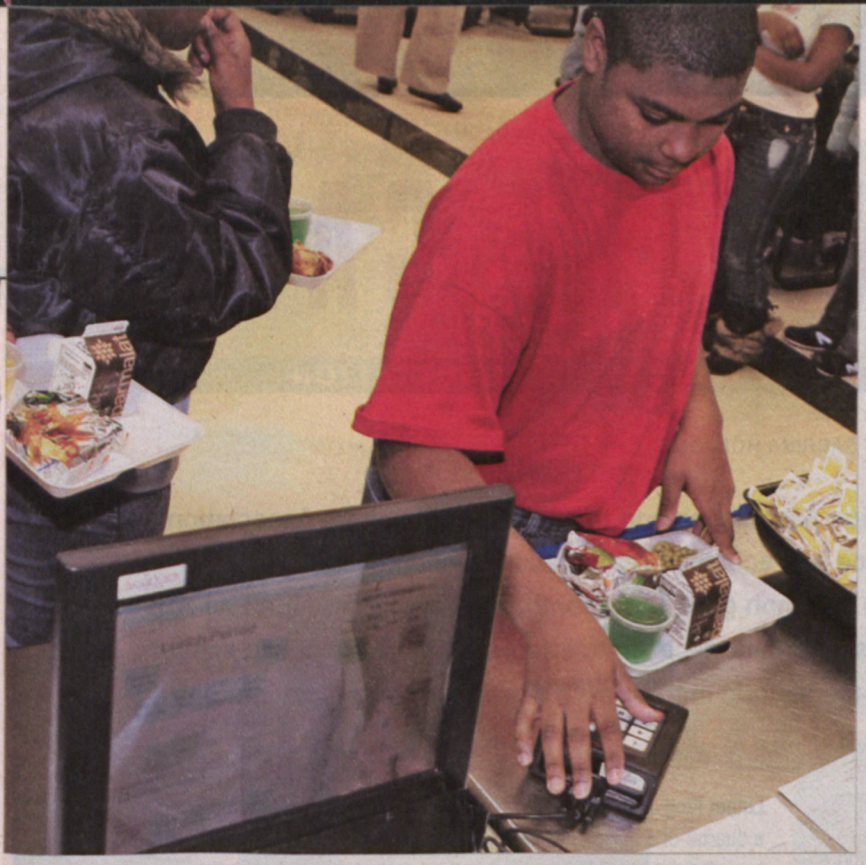
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of overweight children ages 6 to 11 more than doubled in the past 20 years, rising from 7 percent in 1980 to 16 percent in 2002. The rate among adolescents ages 12 to 19 more than tripled, increasing from 5 to 16 percent.

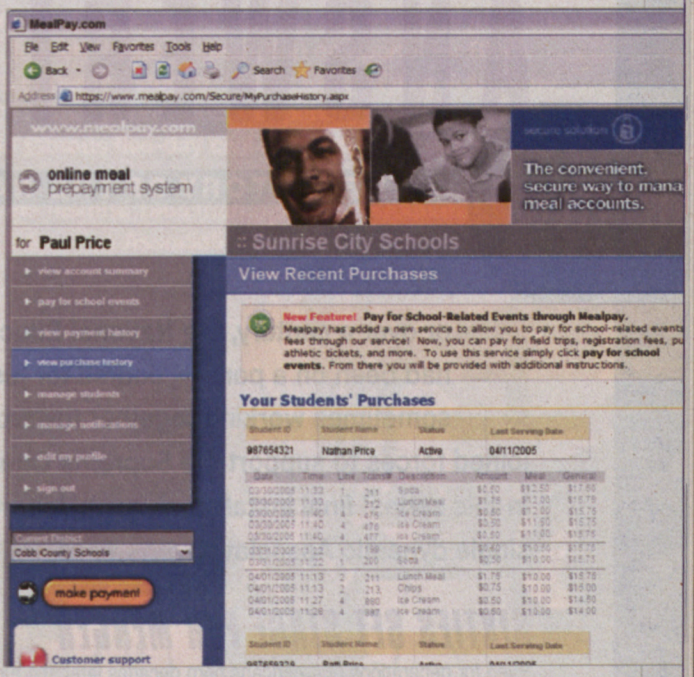
Cashier **William Harris** and cafeteria manager **Lona Burch** embrace the new lunch room technology.

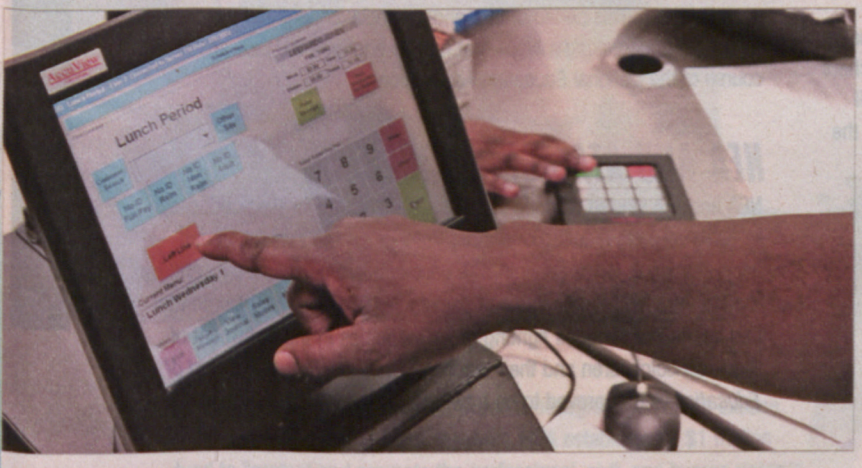
Contributing to the epidemic are the food choices kids make. In most schools, snack bars and à la carte menus offering items such as french fries and onion rings tempt students and compete with the healthier meals the school cafeteria offers.

It's all about healthy choices at Sylvan Hills, according to principal Gwen Atkinson. While many school cafeterias in Georgia offer an à la carte menu, she decided to remove it from her dining facility because she believes a healthy body leads to a healthy mind. "By providing only healthy meals, we're looking for students to trim a few pounds," Atkinson says. "Nutritious lunches improve our students' health, which helps them academically."

Her students have a selection of five entrées each day, which always includes a salad choice. And healthy







Sixth-grader **Michael Robinson** (left) enters his meal code as **William Harris** applies it to his account. Parents can view meal selections online (above).

dessert items like Jell-O, raisins, or fruit cups usually trump ice cream and pie. But that's not to say that the menu is completely devoid of tasty treats. "I have a very vocal student government," Atkinson says.

Healthier students and happier parents aren't the only benefits of the system—the technology also lets food service professionals focus a little less on numbers and a lot more on students.

A Name with a Face

After 18 years as the Sylvan Hills cashier, William Harris has watched a steady stream of kids flow through the lunch line. Mealpay.com has turned what was once a meandering stream into a brisk current, but even though the line moves more quickly now, Harris gets to know more kids than in the days when he had to handle cash and count change. The computer tallies up totals, eliminating the risk of mistakes, while the screen provides information on each of the students passing through the line.

"When the kids punch in their numbers, their names are called up," says Harris. "That way, I get to know them better. I get to put a name with a face and say hello."

The system also displays each child's date of birth. Harris is careful to check the date each day so he can always wish kids a happy birthday. He also gives the students a free cupcake because, on birthdays, it's OK to splurge a little.

Hungry Kids Don't Learn

Another benefit of the electronic prepayment system is increased participation in the meal programs offered at Sylvan Hills. Because the keypad is used by students on the Mealpay.com plan as well as those on the federal free or reduced-price school lunch program, low-income kids aren't singled out. Before, some children chose to go hungry rather than accept their discounted lunch in front of the other students.

Additionally, by allowing parents to prepay, participation in the school breakfast program has increased.

"Many parents aren't able to fix breakfast in the morning, and so lots of kids weren't eating it," says Sylvan Hills cafeteria manager Lona Burch. "Now these kids come in and have a healthy breakfast—they even eat oatmeal! It's so important, because without breakfast, kids will be hungry. And hungry kids don't learn."

Burch, who has been at Sylvan Hills for 27 years, says kids are more sophisticated today than when she first started in the late 1970s. "They're a bit wiser a bit earlier," she says.

They're also comfortable with the new cafeteria technology. "They're using technology all the time—at home, in class, playing games, listening to music. They grew up with things like ATMs and self-checkout," Burch says. "Now technology is everywhere, and it all ties into everything. Paying with cash would seem old-fashioned to these kids." nea

PHOTOS: CAROLINE JOE

ANSWERING THE CALL

THE HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

BY SABRINA HOLCOMB

For over a century, the National Education Association and the American Teachers Association had been on a parallel course for justice and equality for the nation's schoolchildren—sometimes working together toward a common goal. Last month, we watched as NEA and ATA joined forces to support the Supreme Court's landmark decision to integrate America's public schools. In this series' final installment, we celebrate the historic merger of two great organizations into one single dynamic Association.

SIXTIES SET STAGE FOR MERGER

Even for generations of Americans born decades later, the tumultuous 1960s is an iconic period in the nation's history. As the decade unfolded, an unbelieving nation witnessed the twin assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert Kennedy, marchers were attacked with tear gas and fire hoses as they rallied for civil rights, college students clashed with police on campuses across the country, and the Vietnam War polarized the nation. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his renowned "I Have a Dream" speech in front of a quarter of a million people at the famous March on Washington, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and assassinated—all before the decade closed. This period of tremendous social change set the stage for the groundbreaking merger that forever changed the face and course of the National Education Association.

NEA AND ATA JOIN FORCES

NEA and ATA started working together as advocates for Black education in 1926, forming a Joint Committee to focus on the evaluation and accreditation of Black schools. The partnership was successful, and by the time the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, the Joint Committee had spent four decades fighting gross inequities in the treatment of Black schoolchildren and their teachers. Even the *Brown v. Board of Education* victory proved to be a two-edged sword: When school

TEACHERS AND STUDENTS MARCH. On the march to Montgomery, NEA staff reporter Howard Carroll interviewed a high school senior who was among the teachers, students, and clergy assaulted for participating in a voter registration rally in Selma a few weeks before.

WITNESS TO HISTORY

Former NEA staff reporter Howard Carroll speaks firsthand about his experiences in Selma:

"I went down to Selma because the teachers, our Black members, played such a big part in the civil rights movement. When I went into the schools and talked to the teachers, I saw the stark differences in their circumstances. It was a tragedy to think that people who were our members were denied the opportunities White educators had. A few weeks before the final march to Montgomery, many teachers had been assaulted when they tried to march across the Pettus Bridge. The march had to be halted because the marchers were overcome by tear gas."

FIT TO TEACH, FIT TO VOTE. The NEA-ATA Joint Committee sent leaders and staff to help teachers in Selma, Alabama, launch a voter registration campaign for Black educators under the slogan, "Fit to Teach, Fit to Vote." The teachers' campaign provided an opening spark for the voter drives and famous five-day civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery led by Martin Luther King Jr. The national media covering the historic 1965 march set up headquarters at the Alabama Education Association.

districts in 17 states used court-ordered desegregation as an excuse to dismiss hundreds of Black teachers, NEA established a $1 million fund to "protect and promote the professional, civil, and human rights of educators." This fund and the Joint Committee helped support Black teachers who were fired for participating in the voter registration drives that were central to the civil rights struggles of the '60s. In a yearlong drive, NEA asked each member of the organized teaching profession to contribute at least one dollar to the fund, and teachers across the country came to the aid of their colleagues.

COUNTDOWN TO UNITY

The Joint Committee first discussed a plan to unify NEA and ATA in 1945, but there was adamant opposition from some affiliates and a lukewarm reception from others. At the time, 16 states and the District of Columbia had separate associations for Black and White teachers. Only four states merged affiliates over the next two decades, and in one last effort to unify the remaining affiliates, delegates at the 1964 Representative Assembly passed a resolution requiring racially segregated affiliates to merge. Finally, after years of intense negotiation, NEA and ATA agreed to merge at the 1966 Representative Assembly.

SHOWING UNITY. **NEA-ATA Joint Committee members gather at the annual meeting in 1961.**

A HISTORIC MERGER

The dramatic and heartfelt merger ceremony took place in Miami Beach, where 13 years earlier NEA had relocated the convention when the city assured them it would not discriminate against Black delegates. The lights in the great convention hall dimmed to darkness as spotlights focused on five men at a small table on the stage. As the presidents and executive secretaries of NEA and ATA signed a Unification Certificate, delegates sang "Glory, Glory, Hallelujah," then erupted into a prolonged standing ovation. Preserving an ATA tradition, NEA continued to hold a Human and Civil Rights Awards Program to honor individuals and affiliates who expanded educational opportunities for minority students and educators.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Neither the Association nor the country changed overnight. Battles continued to be fought as some affiliates resisted unification, and widespread dismissals and unfair treatment of Black educators persisted. In some communities, schools were burned to prevent desegregation, and many Black students were expelled and injured—even killed. But NEA was able to work more vigorously on behalf of true unity, within the organization and in the schools. NEA set a timetable for the remaining affiliates to merge and met with NAACP Legal Defense Fund lawyers and the U.S. Office of Education to develop short- and long-range plans to halt the abuse of teachers and students.

A POWERFUL LEGACY

The merger between NEA and ATA had long-term implications, not only for Black teachers and students, but for other minority populations, including women. Three months after the merger, NEA sponsored a major conference on bilingual education and the needs of Spanish-speaking students. The NEA conference led directly to the passage of the 1968 Bilingual Education Act—a great legacy for Braulio Alonso, who became NEA's first Hispanic president in 1967.

In 1968, Elizabeth Duncan Koontz was elected NEA's first Black president, and NEA established the Human and Civil Rights Division. Committed to helping civil rights law and rhetoric become reality, the Division tackled a variety of issues affecting minority education. Over the next decade, NEA created working task forces that later morphed into four caucuses representing a range of racial and ethnic minorities.

MAKING HISTORY. ATA President R.J. Martin and NEA President Richard D. Batchelder (seated) seal the merger. With them (standing left to right) are ATA Executive Secretary Joseph T. Brooks, NEA Executive Secretary William G. Carr, and ATA President-elect Hudson L. Barksdale. "Outstretched hands must extend on all sides if this unity is to become a reality," NEA told its members.

ELIZABETH DUNCAN KOONTZ, NEA's first Black president.

BRAULIO ALONSO, NEA's first Hispanic president.

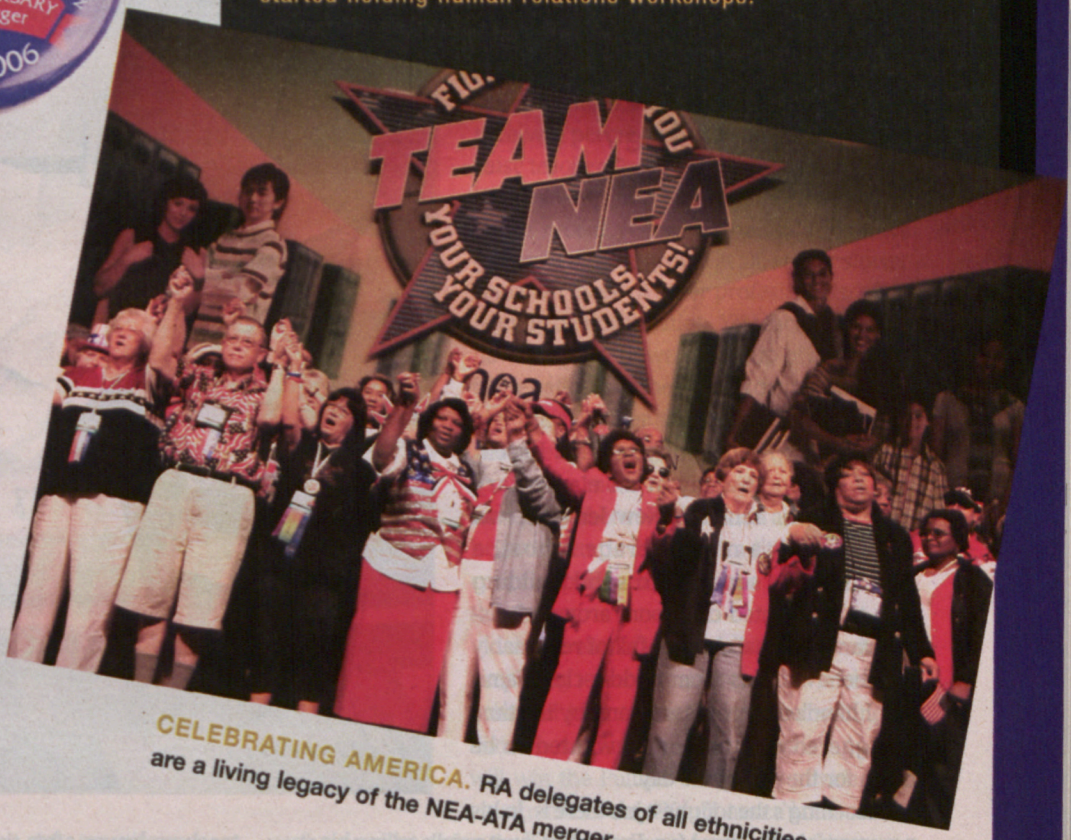
KOONTZ

ALONSO

MERGER MEMORIES

E.B. Palmer, former executive director of the North Carolina Teachers Association (ATA affiliate), recalls the events surrounding the merger.

"The merger between ATA and NEA was a monumental step. It came at a time when many Whites and Blacks were uneasy about the consequences of integration. ATA members were afraid we'd lose everything—our schools, our principals, and our teachers, who were helping our kids through the process of desegregation. No one knew whether the new melting pot would be successful, but one America meant one America. By merging, NEA and ATA were way ahead of the rest of the country—paving the way for businesses and government to follow their example. By merging with ATA, NEA set the tone for the social fabric of America. Every government agency started holding human relations workshops."



CELEBRATING AMERICA. RA delegates of all ethnicities are a living legacy of the NEA-ATA merger.

As America's classrooms grow more racially diverse, the merger that took place 40 years ago has grown more significant and noteworthy. From its inception in 1857—when NEA welcomed Black members four years before the Civil War—to the merger with ATA during the height of the civil rights struggles, the Association has been ahead of its time, crusading for the rights of educators and the children whose lives they touch.

Special thanks to the following for their invaluable help with the NEA-ATA History Series: Al-Tony Gilmore, Olivia Gattis, Eddy Gattis, Marilyn Hutton, Nelson Canton, and Karen Zauber.

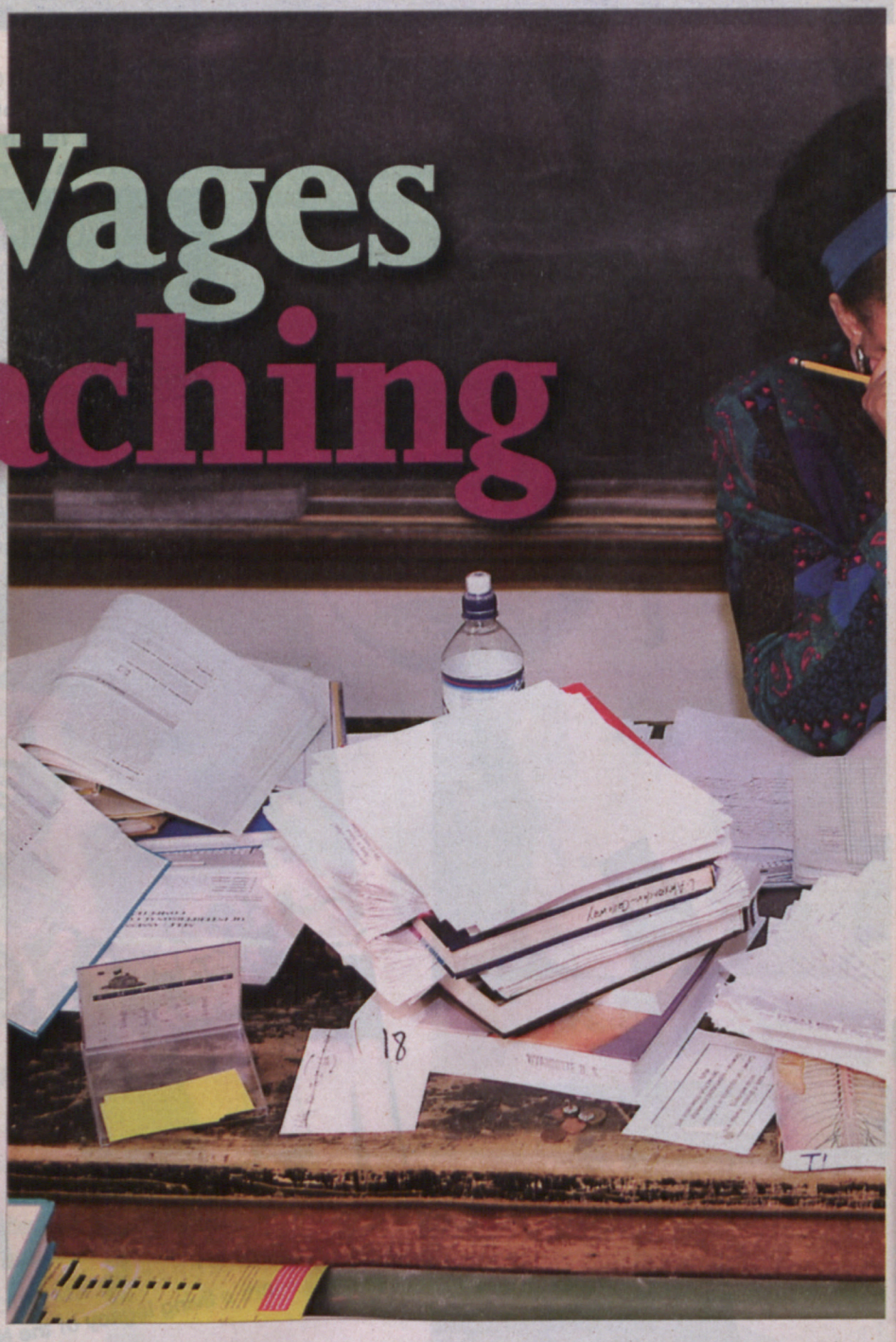
More on the Web!

For a special tour of NEA and ATA history, check out our online quiz, video clips, and photo galleries at www.nea.org/aboutnea/neahistory.html.

For a full account of the historic merger between NEA and ATA, click on www.nea.org/aboutnea/ata.html.

PHOTOS LEFT AND CENTER: NEA ARCHIVES; RIGHT: CALVIN KNIGHT

The Wages of Teaching



A *Newsweek* columnist calls for higher pay for teachers, saying, 'They made us. We owe them.'

BY ANNA QUINDLEN

A couple of years ago I spent the day at an elementary school in New Jersey. It was a nice, average school, a square and solid building with that patented classroom aroma of disinfectant and chalk, chock-full of reasonably well-behaved kids from middle-class families. I handled three classes, and by the time I staggered out the door, I wanted to lie down for the rest of the day.

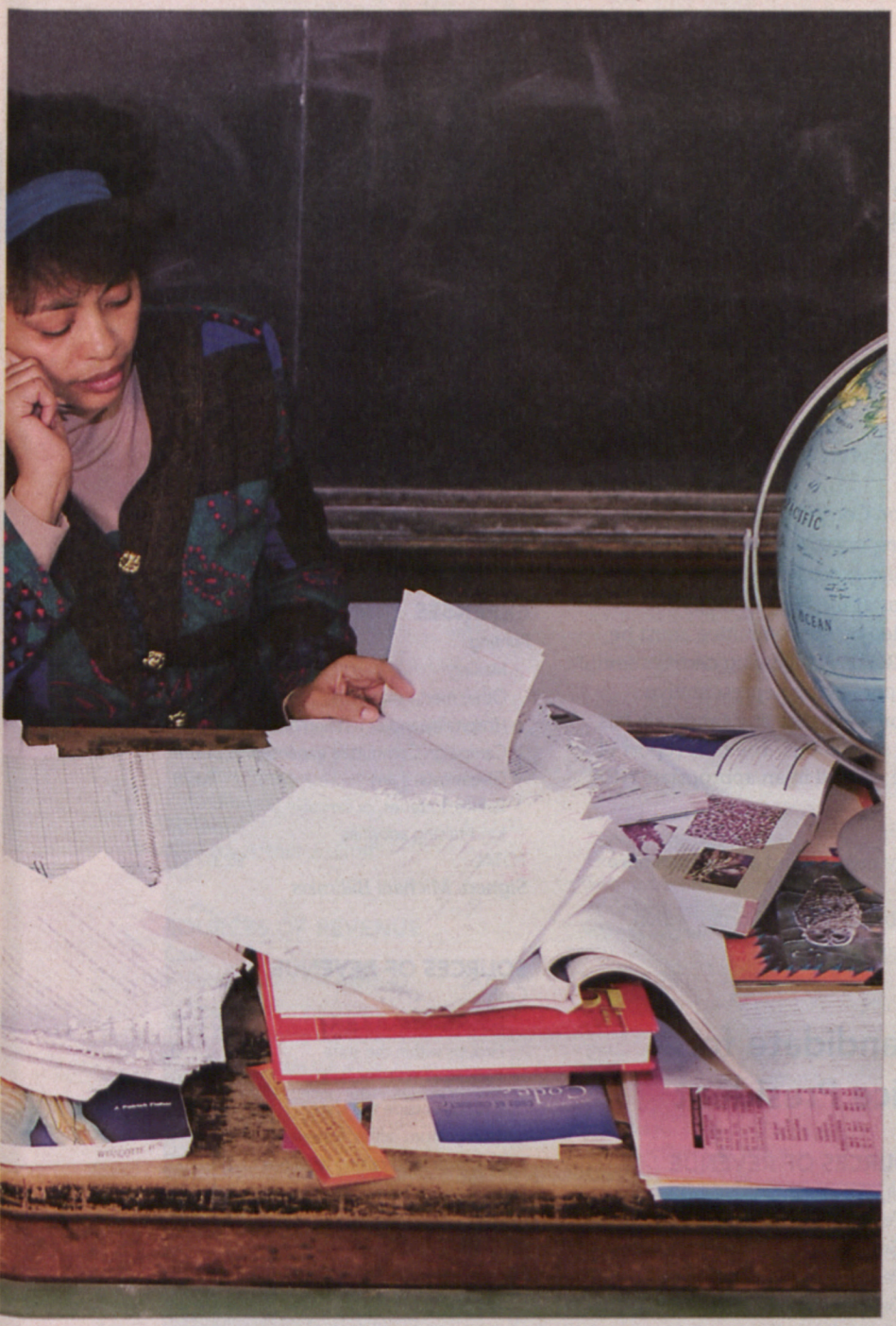
Teaching's the toughest job there is. In his new memoir, *Teacher Man,* Frank McCourt recalls telling his students, "Teaching is harder than working on docks and warehouses." Not to mention writing a column. I can stare off into the middle distance with my chin in my hand any time. But you go mentally south for five minutes in front of a class of fifth-graders, and you are sunk.

The average new teacher today makes just under $30,000 a year, which may not look too bad for a twentysomething with no mortgage and no kids. But soon enough the newbies realize that they can make more money and not work anywhere near as hard elsewhere. After a lifetime of hearing the old legends about cushy hours and summer vacations, they figure out that early mornings are for students who need extra help, evenings are for test corrections and lesson plans, and weekends and summers are for second and even third jobs to try to pay the bills.

According to the Department of Education, one in every five teachers leaves after the first year, and almost twice as many leave within three. If any business had that rate of turnover, someone would do something smart and strategic to fix it. This isn't any business. It's the most important business around, the gardeners of the landscape of the human race.

Unfortunately, the current fashionable fixes for education take a page directly from the business playbook, and it's a terrible fit. Instead of simply acknowledging that starting salaries are woefully low and committing to increasing them and finding the money for reasonable, recurring raises, pols have wasted decades obsessing about something called merit pay. It's a concept that works fine if you're making widgets, but kids aren't widgets, and good teaching isn't an assembly line.

McCourt's book is instructive. Early in his 30-year career, he's teaching at a vocational high school and realizes that his English students are never more inspired than when forging excuse notes



from their parents. So McCourt assigns the class to write excuse notes, the results ranging "from a family epidemic of diarrhea to a sixteen-wheeler truck crashing into the house." Pens fly with extravagant lies. You can almost feel the imaginations kick in.

The point about tying teaching salaries to widget standards is that it's hard to figure out a useful way to measure the merit of what a really good teacher does. You can imagine the principal who would see McCourt's gambit as the work of a gifted teacher, and just as easily imagine the one who would find it unseemly. Tying raises to pass rates is a flagrant invitation to inflate student achievement. Tying them to standardized tests makes rote regurgitation the centerpiece of schools. Both are blind to the merit of teachers who shoulder the challenging work of educating those less able, more troubled, from homes where there are no pencils, no books, even no parents. A teacher whose Advanced Placement class sends everyone on to top-tier colleges; a teacher whose remedial-reading class finally gets through to some, but not all, of a student group that is failing. There is merit in both.

The National Education Association has been pushing for a minimum starting salary of $40,000 for all teachers. Why not? If these people can teach six-year-olds to add and get adolescents to attend to algebra, surely we can do the math to get them a decent wage. Since the corporate world is the greatest, and richest, beneficiary of well-educated workers, maybe a national brain trust might be set up that would turn a tax on corporate profits into an endowment to raise teacher salaries.

Maybe states and communities could also pass regulations with this simple proviso: no school administrator should ever receive a percentage raise greater than the raise teachers get. Neither should state legislators.

In recent years, teacher salaries have grown, if they've grown at all, at a far slower rate than those of other professionals, often lagging behind inflation. Yet teachers should have the most powerful group of advocates in the nation: not their union, but we the people, their former students. I am a writer because of the encouragement of teachers.

Surely most Americans must feel the same, that there were women and men who helped them levitate just a little above the commonplace expectations they had for themselves.

At the end of his book, McCourt, who is preparing to leave teaching with the idea of living off his pension and maybe writing—and whose maiden effort, *Angela's Ashes*, will win the Pulitzer—is giving advice to a young substitute. "You'll never know what you've done to, or for, the hundreds coming and going," he says. Yeah, but the hundreds know, the hundreds who are millions who are us. They made us. We owe them. **nea**

For more on NEA's campaign on professional pay, visit our Web site at **www.nea.org/pay/index.html**.

This essay by Anna Quindlen, a columnist and author, first appeared in the November 28, 2005, issue of *Newsweek* magazine. To read it online, go to: **http://msnbc.msn.com/id/10116331/site/newsweek/**.
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PHOTOS TOP: NATHAN HAM; RIGHT: KAREN CIPOLLA

Final Reports of Campaign Revenues and Expenses

NEA Standing Rule 10.E provides as follows:

Campaign Expenses. No portion of dues money collected at the local, regional, state, or national level shall be used to promote the candidacy of any individual for an NEA office.

Using forms provided by the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules, each candidate shall file a preliminary report of campaign revenues and expenses, including projected revenues and expenses, with the committee prior to the opening of nominations at the Representative Assembly. A final report, on the forms provided by the committee, must be filed with the committee no later than thirty (30) days following certification of the election results. The committee shall report to the Representative Assembly, prior to any nominations or elections, whether any candidate has in any manner violated the election rules and regulations. The final report of campaign revenues and expenditures shall be printed in an appropriate NEA publication for inspection by any member.

The following reports were filed in a timely manner and are printed here pursuant to Rule 10.E.

Candidates are listed below by office and by alphabetical order within each office.

Candidate for President

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$1,557.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	200.00
Groups outside the state	301.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	323.00
Donations in kind	75.00
TOTAL	$2,456.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,915.69
Mailing	101.00
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	0
Giveaway(s) if any	250.00
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	160.94
TOTAL	$2,427.63

Signed: Reg Weaver

Candidate for Vice President

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$735.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	3,077.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$3,812.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$870.00
Mailing	555.00
Other media materials	509.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	969.00
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$2,903.00

Signed: Dennis Van Roekel

Candidates for NEA Executive Committee

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$0
Groups within the state	4,600.51
Persons outside the state	717.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$5,317.51

EXPENSES

Printing	$1,899.09
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	3,335.14
Giveaway(s) if any	83.28
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$5,317.51

Signed: Michael Billirakis

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$2,000.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	1,000.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	1,080.00
Donations in kind	400.00
TOTAL	$4,480.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$2,274.97
Mailing	661.44
Other media materials	400.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	729.04
Giveaway(s) if any	200.00
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	251.98
TOTAL	$4,517.43

Signed: Marsha Smith

Candidates for NEA Director, ESP At-Large

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$25.00
Groups within the state	177.00
Persons outside the state	25.00
Groups outside the state	50.00
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$277.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$271.00
Mailing	0
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	270.00
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$541.00

Signed: Arthur L. Goff

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$508.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	145.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$653.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$830.13
Mailing	75.09
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	41.54
Giveaway(s) if any	50.00
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$996.76

Signed: Ray Heideman

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$150.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	113.00
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$263.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$272.37
Mailing	50.00
Other media materials	0
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	0
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	141.00
TOTAL	$463.37

Signed: Veronica Henderson

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$500.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	45.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$545.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$190.00
Mailing	23.00
Other media materials	117.04
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	214.65
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$544.69

Signed: Rebecca Marks

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$0
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	625.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	50.00
Donations in kind	100.00
TOTAL	$775.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$598.00
Mailing	0
Other media materials	44.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	92.00
Giveaway(s) if any	287.44
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$1,021.44

Signed: Sharon Scott

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$1,065.00
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	100.00
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	$1,165.00

EXPENSES

Printing	$330.00
Mailing	352.42
Other media materials	2,876.00
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	43.00
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$3,574.72

Signed: Allyson "Sunny" Story

Candidate for NEA Director, Higher Education

SOURCES OF REVENUE

Cash	
Persons within the state	$0
Groups within the state	0
Persons outside the state	0
Groups outside the state	0
Income from raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
Donations in kind	0
TOTAL	0

EXPENSES

Printing	$141.23
Mailing	0
Other media materials	226.27
Hospitality and entertainment	0
Campaign Committee expenses	63.47
Giveaway(s) if any	0
Raffles, lotteries, or similar fund-raising activities	0
TOTAL	$430.97

Signed: Sally Pestana

Should all children attend preschool?

YES

I teach a morning and afternoon session of preschool in a wonderfully diverse school of children from all socioeconomic backgrounds. With the expectations of the No Child Left Behind law and the demands of a more challenging curriculum, preschool is even more vital emotionally, physically, and educationally to a child's development.

Research shows that children begin to learn compassion and empathy around the age of four. A classroom setting provides opportunities for young children to practice their skills under the guidance of a teacher. For example, in my classroom, I encourage children to talk to each other about problems before coming to me. They are learning to express themselves in intelligent and compassionate ways. School is also a good opportunity for children to play and interact with other children on a level playing field. No one owns the toys in the classroom! Students can help each other learn the social ropes.

A child can also develop physical skills in preschool. Not only do they have opportunities to play outside on safe equipment, they have access to balls, jump ropes, and other physical education equipment. The health benefits of enriching a child's gross motor skills are immense and should stay with them as they grow. In addition to the large muscle skills, their fine motor or small muscle skills are also developed. Correct pencil grasp and scissor skills will better prepare them for kindergarten assignments.

Finally, prekindergarten is educationally vital. Children learn skills needed to begin the process of reading and writing. They are able to explore their world in a scientific way without many restrictions. They are able to freely express themselves in art, blocks, writing, and imagination.

As the curriculum demands more at an early age, I feel the adage will now be "All I really need to know, I learned in preschool."

MARGARET FETTING teaches preschool in Frederick County, Maryland.

NO

Are we pushing children too hard by asking them to start preschool too soon? Can they all succeed? Some children are ready, some are not, and the decision on whether to send a child to preschool should be based on a child's own cognitive, emotional, and physical development and individual readiness.

We all know that children enter the world with a great capacity to learn. However, if a child is too anxious about separation, cannot yet adapt to group situations, or is still unable to express physical and emotional needs, he or she is likely not ready for preschool. But parents can still foster the child's capacity to learn and prepare them to be successful in school—and in life. Research shows that children are more likely to succeed in learning when their families actively support them.

For many children, life is already too hurried. They need time to grow, run, and play—the world of play and pretend can be a wonderful education experience. When I was growing up, I learned about the physical world by running around our Idaho farm with my brother and sister. I built structures with Lincoln Logs, learned the alphabet with wooden blocks, and learned about music by playing the piano at my grandparents' house. My parents read to us often and limited our TV time.

When young children are provided with an environment rich in language and literacy interactions, and are presented with opportunities to listen to and use language constantly, they acquire the essential building blocks for learning to read. A child entering school without these skills runs a significant risk of starting behind and staying behind in school. However, these opportunities can be provided at home if a child isn't ready for preschool. The child does not have to attend preschool to be presented with a learning environment.

KEVIN KRAMER is a reading specialist at Morningside Elementary School in Twin Falls, Idaho.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Should all children attend preschool? To vote, visit our Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should girls be required to take more math classes? The tally on the question in the last *NEA Today*: 44% Yes 56% No

Should technology be used in every classroom? If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Cindy Long, **clong@nea.org**.

ILLUSTRATION: TED PITTS

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BEST BOARDS

My best bulletin board is produced by the students themselves. Each student picks out his or her preferred color of a 9 x 12-inch piece of construction paper that I staple to a long wall. On the edge of each paper, I attach the student's photo, name typed in a giant font, and favorite "success" quote by a famous person. Whenever students receive mastery (B or better) on their assignments, they can post up to two papers on their personal bulletin board. The room looks colorful, the kids enjoy having their own display, and both the administration and parents are pleased and proud.

BARBARA CAPPS
Sixth-grade teacher, Campbell, California

I teach second-grade students who are deaf and hard of hearing. For their most recent bulletin board project (shown at left), my students made masks of their favorite animals, researched five facts about each animal in the school library, and then used a simple word processing program to prepare a report. I also had students insert a photo or graphic of the animal into their written report. The students *loved* this project, and I continually receive compliments on this board.

JENNIFER ISENSEE
Santa Ana, California

TICKLED PINK

I had spent several long hours constructing an elaborate display for our Cultural Heritage Festival and was excited to show it to my class of second-graders. Most of our story corner wall was covered with a huge world map bordered by colorful miniature flags. I gathered the students on the carpet directly in front of the enormous map and asked breathlessly, "So, who notices something different today?" The hand of my most witty, observant, and "fashion-forward" student shot straight in the air. I smiled in anticipation, ready to acknowledge my mapping masterpiece. "You're wearing a new lipstick!" she burst out proudly, "That pink is perfect on you!"

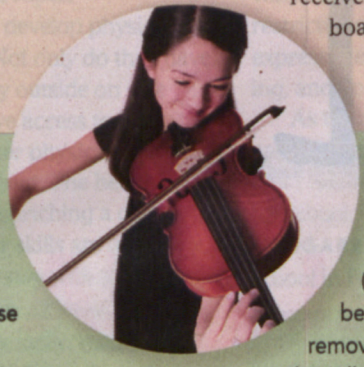
KAREN MARIE CHRISTENSON
Schoolwide Enrichment Specialist, St. Paul, Minnesota

Turn Down the Volume

The noise in our cafeteria at lunchtime is LOUD! How do we get the kids to use their "indoor voices"?
CINDY LEKI *Fourth-grade teacher, Fairfax, Virginia*

ANSWER: We started a trivial pursuit game in our cafeteria twice a week. The students had to listen to the questions and then respond (using a microphone so everyone could hear). Cafeteria helpers identified students who wanted to answer the questions, and those who answered correctly were allowed to select a small prize. The game helped keep the noise level down, and the students had a blast. Sometimes we had tables compete against each other to earn chips. If the table was using quiet voices, we gave them one chip or several if they were quiet throughout the entire lunch period. And chips could be taken away if the students grew too loud. The table that had the most chips at the end of a month earned a prize (pizza or ice cream) for everyone at the table.

DIANE O'MARA
School counselor
Pemberton, New Jersey



ANSWER: Our school used a colored cup system to control cafeteria noise levels. Three stacked plastic cups were placed at the end of every table—red on the bottom, yellow in the middle, and green on top. When a teacher (or any adult) felt a table was becoming too noisy, he or she removed the green cup, leaving the yellow cup to serve as a warning to the students. If the table continued to be too noisy, then the yellow cup was changed to red and that table had silent lunch for the remainder of the period. This system worked well for our students, placing the responsibility for the noise level on them. The cups are inexpensive and can last a whole year.

SANDY HEBBE
Instructional support teacher
Goochland, Virginia

ANSWER: We break up the talking with music. Every 10 minutes, calm classical or other relaxing, soothing music is played. While the music is playing, all students must stop talking. This helps break up the building volume. Just as the noise begins to peak, the children are quieted for a few minutes. When they resume talking, the volume is low. An added benefit? More kids are finishing their lunches!

LAURIE ANN LAWRENCE
Second-grade teacher
Stockbridge, Georgia

PHOTO TOP: COURTESY OF J. ISENSEE; LIPSTICK PHOTO: STOCKDISC; MICROPHONE PHOTO: RYAN MCVAY; VIOLINIST AND TRAFFIC LIGHT SIGN PHOTO: PHOTODISC

TOP TIPS

Reviving Markers

When markers have dried out, pour 1/2-inch of nail polish remover into a paper cup and let the marker tips soak in the solution for 30 seconds. Let them dry for five minutes before using. The acetone in the remover restores moisture without diluting the color and draws ink down to the tip of the markers.

MITZI RITZMAN *Speech-language pathologist*
Lincoln, Nebraska

Signing Answers

I teach my students the American Sign Language alphabet for the letters A through K the first week of school. When we go over state-mandated test items, students sign the letter for the answer. This is a quick and easy way to assess students' progress, keep them from shouting out the answer, and keep everyone involved.

MARY GAMBREL *Eighth-grade math teacher, Amarillo, Texas*

Making-Up Classwork

I have a desk blotter calendar on the bulletin board and put the class assignments in the square for that date. When a student returns from being absent, he or she simply goes to the calendar to see what needs to be completed. I also keep a Make-Up Work Box on a table under the calendar for easy accessibility.

KEN SCHETTER *High school math teacher, New Market, Tennessee*

IS THAT YOUR FINAL ANSWER?

MY FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING was full of surprises. One day, during a fun science lesson, I introduced my students to the concept of density, specifically, floating versus sinking objects. I asked if anyone had ever heard of "buoyancy" and was pleased and excited when one boy's hand went up. I said, "Would you like to explain to the class what you know about buoyancy?" Swelling with pride, he answered, "Buoyancy is the capital of Idaho!"

CHRISTINA RAUSCH
Fourth-grade teacher
Berea, Kentucky

Share your wisdom, ask your question!

What's the most important lesson you feel you can teach your students?

Send your answers to these or other questions on this page to **sholcomb@nea.org**. Or, send us a question you'd like to see posted. Please include your name, your job, and the community and state where you work.

For a weekly e-mail of questions, answers, and practical classroom tips, join Works4Me, one of NEA's most popular and useful services. Just send the message "subscribe Works4Me" (without the quotation marks) to **Lyris@list.nea.org**.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JOHN P. WOOD (CARTOON); PHOTODISC; SIEDE PREIS; MARK PARISI (CARTOON); DIGITAL VISION

Shop till Your Mouse Drops

Sure there's wacky stuff on the Web, but there are also great deals to help you stretch your shopping dollar.

BY SELENA MARANJIAN

What do Willie Nelson's new CD, posters for your classroom, and a Toyota Camry have in common? They're all for sale on eBay. And eBay isn't the only online general store out there these days, either. Here are some of the top Internet marketplaces:

EBAY.COM—Make a bid and buy items in online auctions. Can't wait to see if you'll snag that vintage Jetsons lunchbox for your little one? Choose the "Buy It Now" feature and scoop it up for a fixed price before the first bid comes in.

AMAZON.COM—It's not just for books anymore. This site features auctions and fixed-price sellers offering a wide variety of wares. A new feature now lets you buy new, gently used (even signed) books from a private seller on the site for less than Amazon's own retail price.

HALF.COM—Buy and sell books, movies, music, video games, and more for fixed prices. Sick of watching *Steel Magnolias*? Don't just toss it. Unload it on someone else and make some money.

CRAIGSLIST.ORG—A hip version of your newspaper's classifieds section. In addition to local personals, job listings, and discussion forums, there are also sales listings for everything from auto parts to houses. You can even barter with others or scoop up free items that folks are trying to get rid of in your city. A recent posting on the Omaha, Nebraska, Craigslist page offered a free praying mantis hatchling, calling it "great for science projects or school." Can't find a much cheaper classroom pet than that.

HOW TO HAGGLE

It's simple enough to buy something you find offered for a fixed price online, but navigating auctions can be trickier. Below are some tips for buying at the best price:

First, engage in some due diligence. Check out the seller's reputation. Has he sold many items? Is the recent feedback from other buyers who did business with him mainly positive? Look up closed auctions to get a sense of price ranges for past sales. Look at prices on several sites, in case you stumble upon a clueless seller offering the item for a song.

Read the item description carefully, and make sure it's what you expect. Is it made of wood when you wanted metal? Is it new or used? Take note of the shipping and handling charges, and make sure you can deal with the payment options offered. Some sellers won't take personal checks, for example, while many will take PayPal payments, which are handled on another Web site to which you'll be directed. At sites such as Amazon.com and Half.com, you'll likely pay via credit card, with the Web site serving as middleman, sending a payment to the seller.

Hold off as long as you can before bidding to avoid driving up the price. At eBay, you can "watch" all the items you want, and track the auction deadline by adding them to a list maintained on your "My eBay" page. You can also set up searches on eBay to alert you by e-mail whenever a new item is listed that meets your search terms.

SELL YOUR STUFF ONLINE

Online marketplaces don't just exist to take your money—you can make some, too. Here are some tips for selling effectively:

MAKE THE MOST of your listing's title by including all words a buyer might use to search for the item you're selling. List those DVDs as "Sopranos—Season 3 New Complete DVD Set Three Third," not "Sopranos DVD." Use brand names, descriptive terms, and photos.

RESEARCH EACH ITEM before listing it. Find out how much it's selling for elsewhere, and don't be willing to accept much less. The going rate might be considerably higher on one site than another, so take note.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE the uncertainty of auctions, sell your item for a fixed price.

ILLUSTRATION: SHAKIROV

Ready for Retirement?

Smart ways to kick-start your golden years fund.

How can you save for a comfy and cozy retirement? Let us count the ways.

For starters, the easiest option is often a 403 (b) plan or supplemental retirement savings plan offered through your employer. It lets you divert dollars from your paycheck into an account, and many employers will even kick in some matching dollars. That's free money! In these plans, you usually have a variety of investments to choose from. Don't be too conservative, especially if your retirement is far away. The stock market generally outperforms most alternatives over long periods.

Then there are IRAs. With "traditional" IRAs, you contribute pre-tax money into an account which you manage yourself (investing in stocks, mutual funds, etc.). The money grows tax-deferred and is only taxed when you withdraw it. Note: You may not be able to deduct your contributions if you or your spouse are covered by a retirement plan at work, or if your adjusted gross income is above a certain level, but it's still a good way to save.

Newer Roth IRAs are also compelling for those who qualify. You invest post-tax money (in other words, your contribution isn't tax-deductible), but when it's time to take the money out, your earnings are completely tax-free.

To learn more about IRAs as well as other retirement tools such as pensions, annuities, and Social Security, visit www.neamb.com, www.money.cnn.com/retirement, or www.fool.com/retirement.htm.

School, on Sale Now!

Heading back to class doesn't necessarily require breaking the bank.

If you're thinking about going back to school for additional coursework, there are ways to cut costs. Consider these options:

LOOK INTO A VARIETY of education vendors. A local community college or state school may be inexpensive, but a private university may offer a special program or rate for teachers and other adults. Check out online schools as well, which may offer more flexible scheduling.

SEE IF YOUR EMPLOYER OFFERS any education assistance, such as tuition or book reimbursement. Many require that you earn at least a B grade to get reimbursed, so make sure you hit those books hard.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AVAILABLE tax credits that reduce your tax bill dollar-for-dollar. The Lifetime Learning Credit, for example, offers up to $2,000 if you qualify.

GET THAT TAX DEDUCTION. If you don't qualify for the Lifetime Learning Credit, you might be able to deduct up to $4,000 paid for tuition and fees, reducing the amount of income subject to taxes. (Income limits apply.) On the other hand, some student loan interest may be deductible—if you're attending school at least half-time in a degree program and meet income requirements.

CONSIDER TAPPING YOUR IRA only as a last resort. (You don't want to rob yourself of retirement savings.) One plus, though, is that you won't get hit with a 10 percent early withdrawal penalty from an IRA if it's used for your qualified higher ed expenses.

CHECK OUT NEA MEMBER BENEFITS for loans. Call 800-637-4636.

Get a Move On

There's no getting around the fact that moving from one home to another is a big pain. But it doesn't have to cost as much as you think or be as much of a burden as you fear. Here are some tips:

TRADITIONALLY, people think of two options: save money by renting a truck and doing all the heavy lifting, or pay professionals and part with more hard-earned dollars. There's another option, though. Do your own packing, rent your own truck, and hire movers only to load and unload it. For example, U-Haul's Web site links to a directory of movers in your area, with customer reviews and contact info.

GET WRITTEN ESTIMATES from professional movers. Consider letting them pack your fragile or expensive items, so they'll be responsible for any damage. (Don't forget to buy insurance.) Number all boxes and keep good records of what's in each, lest one or more get lost. You can save money by not moving in the summer, moving mid-month, and moving Monday through Thursday.

DON'T MAKE BOXES TOO HEAVY. Use smaller boxes for books. You can get free, sturdy boxes from liquor stores, grocery stores—which typically stock shelves late in the evening—and other retailers.

KEEP VALUABLES such as irreplaceable photos, documents, medications, and computer equipment with you, and move them yourself. You don't want the only photo of Aunt Gertrude tangoing at your wedding to end up in a box that falls off the truck. Also keep the moving company contract with you in case you need to refer to the terms during the move.

TRY TO DO AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE at your new home, such as cleaning, painting, and refinishing floors, before you move in.

www.neamb.com

Learn more and get estimates at www.Moving.com, www.HomeFair.com, and www.HomeStore.com. Get tips for avoiding scams at www.MovingScam.com.

ILLUSTRATION TOP: JOHATHAN EVANS; ILLUSTRATION BELOW: SUSAN LEVAN; PHOTO: DIGITAL VISION

A Final Sunset

Oregon teacher Suzanne Garman realized a lifelong dream on the beaches of Hawaii.

Editor's Note: Before completing this story about Garman's special trip, we learned that she had passed away after three years with cancer. Although we do not usually feature deceased members, we wanted to share her story.

IT WAS ON THE MONDAYS that her students and coworkers returned from spring vacations that Garman's wanderlust would really kick in. The middle school teacher in West Linn, Oregon, listened and imagined as they described beach expanses edged by crystal waters and towering, swaying palm trees. She loved warm places and the ocean and always pressed the returning travelers for more details.

But in the spring of 2002, distant islands were pushed from Garman's mind. Doctors diagnosed her with ovarian cancer. She had to retire on disability and leave the classroom behind. But her colleagues and students at Rosemont Ridge Middle School didn't forget her role in their lives. They decided that Garman and her new fiancé needed to see the exotic islands of Hawaii firsthand.

Garman's favorite picture of herself was taken on a backpacking trip in Nepal (left). She never lost her sense of adventure and, last year, relished a trip to Hawaii, where she sampled the local delicacies.

For months, they raised money selling soda and raffle tickets (the winners shaved the sellers' heads), and they sponsored an all-night slumber party, a fishing trip, and a shopping excursion. When they were done, they had raised enough to finance a 10-day trip for Garman.

During the fund-raising, an inspired Garman put even more energy into managing and fighting her illness. She ate more healthfully, read more, and drew good friends even more into her life.

Upon receiving $4,000 for the Hawaii trip, Garman was overwhelmed. "I don't think she really could believe it for a while," says Dennis Kuklok, her husband. "To see how much her students and other teachers cared for her was so moving."

Like many other newlyweds who find themselves in Hawaii, Suzanne and Dennis swam, snorkeled, and sampled the local restaurants' offerings—food plucked right from the surrounding ocean and farms. "We were lucky," Kuklok says, his voice getting quieter, then silent. Within a few months of their return, Garman's health began to decline steadily. "We wouldn't have had any more time," he says. "We thought we'd have more."

Garman died last fall at age 53.

"I DON'T THINK SHE really could believe it for a while. To see how much her students and other teachers cared for her was so moving."

—DENNIS KUKLOK, GARMAN'S HUSBAND

That gift for connecting with her students was a powerful force in Garman's life. Even after cancer forced her to leave the classroom, Garman was unable to ignore her calling as an educator. Delving into books on conflict resolution, she made plans to volunteer at middle schools and teach students about nonviolent communication.

"Real teachers can't change," Garman said in an interview last year. "If you are committed to meeting the needs of the kids, that energy comes from somewhere."

—CAROLYN WHITE AND CYNTHIA KOPKOWSKI

PHOTOS TOP AND CENTER: DENNIS KUKLOK

¿Como se dice buen idea? Iguana!

When Christianne Meneses Jacobs couldn't find a quality children's Spanish-language magazine, she got an idea: create one.

MENESES JACOBS' *IGUANA* has something a little different from most lizards under its skin—pages of entertaining and educational reading, artfully assembled out of a desire to preserve cultural identity.

The second-grade teacher at Garfield Elementary School in Phoenix, Arizona, created *Iguana*, a magazine for children ages 7–12, written in Spanish. It was born out of Meneses Jacobs' struggle to find quality Spanish literature for her young daughter. She wanted something to help her retain Spanish language skills and take pride in her heritage. With help from native speakers from around the world, she and her husband published the first 32-page issue last year. They filled it with stories, educational articles, and colorful pictures.

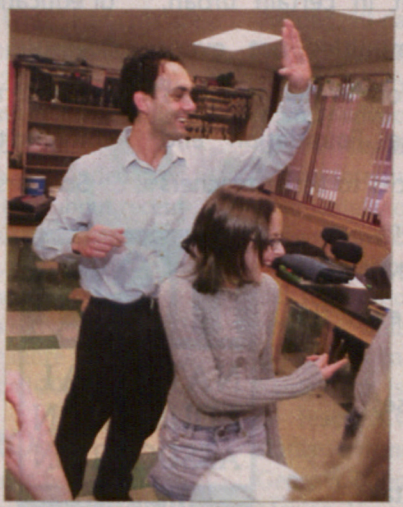
"The idea for this magazine is that kids will continue reading in Spanish, especially since we are becoming a global society where it's so important to be bilingual," says Meneses Jacobs, a native Nicaraguan who moved to the United States in 1988. While helping bilingual children retain the language and preserve the Latino culture, the magazine serves as a supplemental classroom resource. She alternates reading the magazine to her students in English and Spanish, and says some students enjoy it so much they ask their parents for a home subscription. The bimonthly magazine contains ideas for art projects, recipes, word searches, comic strips, and interviews with prominent Latinos.

Flip through a recent issue at www.neatoday.org and visit www.Iguanamagazine.com. You can find the Spanish-language site at www.Iguanarevista.com. —MARY ROBBINS

He Likes Them To Move It, Move It

Connecticut science teacher Douglas Haddad hits the airwaves and ground to get kids healthy.

STUDENTS JUMP around wildly in Haddad's classroom at Henry James Memorial Middle School in Simsbury, Connecticut, and it's not because of shoddy discipline. Rather, Haddad relishes bringing fitness concepts into his classroom. He can't help it.



Haddad is a former cardio-kickboxer, coach, and personal trainer who hits the Hartford, Connecticut, airwaves regularly as the host of a radio program on health and fitness called "The Doctor Doug Show." The country's childhood obesity epidemic is a frequent topic. Haddad recently completed a dissertation on childhood obesity in which he stresses that teachers have to encourage students to get healthy.

"There's no excuse for poor health and fitness," says Haddad, who wrote the book *Top Ten Tips for Tip Top Shape*. "At school, we participate in many activities where the kids can find out the benefits of being fit." In his science classroom, students do hands-on experiments like measuring their heart rates after exercise. Brisk nature walks do double duty—lessons on flora and fauna, as well as a great workout.

It's not just the students benefitting from Haddad's fitness finesse. He helps fellow teachers and support professionals craft exercise and nutrition programs. They have to take a "no excuses" approach to their health though, Haddad says. "You can make anything happen. Just solve it like a problem."

His tips for educators this month? Dodge April showers and get outside for walks, even if only for a few minutes. Boost protein in soups and salads by adding whole grains; fruits like figs and raisins; or legumes, such as lentils and kidney beans. —RITU SHARMA

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Cynthia Kopkowski, section editor, at **ckopkowski@nea.org**.

PHOTO TOP: MARC JACOBS; BOTTOM: JONATHAN OLSON

The Tom Joyner Foundation

Get prepared at one of these 7 campuses:

Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA
Bowie State University, Bowie, MD
Jackson State University, Jackson, MS
Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, NC
Cheyney State University, Cheyney, PA
Tennessee State University, Nashville, TN
Harris-Stowe State College, St. Louis, MO

NEA & Tom Joyner Foundation

Hey Teachers—Get Certified!

$700,000 Scholarship Program

The Foundation and the National Education Association believe that pre-K through 12 curriculum should be taught by licensed teachers. We recognize that in certain urban, suburban, and rural communities not every teacher is licensed. In an effort to help teachers become fully licensed, the Foundation and NEA have agreed to join forces to assist teachers who desire to gain full licensure.

The Foundation and NEA are offering financial assistance in the following areas:

- Tuition for specified courses
- Books
- Support for preparing to take a state teacher licensure examination

nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
nea.org
Great Public Schools for Every Child

To be eligible for this program you must be currently employed as a teacher in a K-12 public school, or currently enrolled in an accredited school of education and have completed course work for licensure. Scholarship winners must commit to teach a minimum of three years in identified communities, to be locally determined.

Scholarships will be made through Historically Black Colleges and Universities in selected areas throughout the United States. If you are interested in participating in this program, please go to **www.nea.org/joyner** and fill out the attached short questionnaire, and we will determine your eligibility and an appropriate local HBCU for you to work through.

www.nea.org/joyner

resources

53 **Grants & Awards** Innovative educators can win an unsung hero award.
55 **Diversity Calendar** April is the time to visit your local library. While you're there, check out some verse and show support for Young People's Poetry Week.
57 **On TV** One hundred years ago, the ground under San Francisco rocked, and fire raged, claiming thousands of lives. Watch the spellbinding story.
57 **NEA's Read Across America** Soccer and reading: A winning combination.
59 **Take Note** You can deduct classroom expenses on your 2005 taxes!
59 **Books by NEA Members** Punxsutawney Phil would like to say a few words.
61 **Fragrance Sensitivity** Your Windsong stays on my mind. And in my sinuses.
62 **Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits** A Web site created just for NEA members.
62 **In Print** Entice kids away from TV with games from around the world.

It's Time To Plan for The NEA Foundation's June Grant Review

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE BY JUNE 1, 2006, FOR BOTH INNOVATION AND LEARNING & LEADERSHIP GRANTS. Recipients will be notified by November 15, 2006. Grants fund activities for 12 months from the award date.

THE NEA FOUNDATION
www.neafoundation.org

Innovation Grants and *Learning & Leadership Grants* are available for all subjects, including the arts, literacy, mathematics, science, and technology. Grant amounts are $5,000 for *Innovation Grants* and either $2,000 (individual) or $5,000 (group) for *Learning & Leadership Grants*.

Through the years, The NEA Foundation has funded over 1,500 grants nationwide to NEA members. Read about recent projects at the Foundation's Web site, and submit your own idea! Practicing K–12 public school teachers, education support professionals, and higher education faculty and staff are all encouraged to apply. Applying for a grant is easy—why wait?

Visit **www.neafoundation.org** today for more information, including guidelines and an application. Or call 202-822-7840.

AWARDS FOR UNSUNG HEROES

For 10 years, ING Unsung Heroes awards have been given to K–12 educators pioneering new teaching methods and techniques that improve learning and inspire success in the classroom.

Educators submit applications that describe projects they have initiated or want to pursue. Projects are judged on innovation, creativity, and the ability to positively influence students.

Each year, 100 finalists receive a $2,000 award, payable to both the winning teacher and his or her school. Winners are selected by Scholarship America, a national non-profit educational support and student aid service organization. Of the 100 finalists, three are selected for additional awards of $5,000, $10,000, and $25,000.

For more, go to **www.ING-usa.com/us/aboutING/communityconnections/ineducation/unsungheroes/index.htm** or contact Scholarship America via e-mail at **ing@scholarshipamerica.org** or by phone at 1-800-537-4180. The deadline for 2006 applications is **May 1, 2006.**

TEACHER TOUR OF THE GALAPAGOS

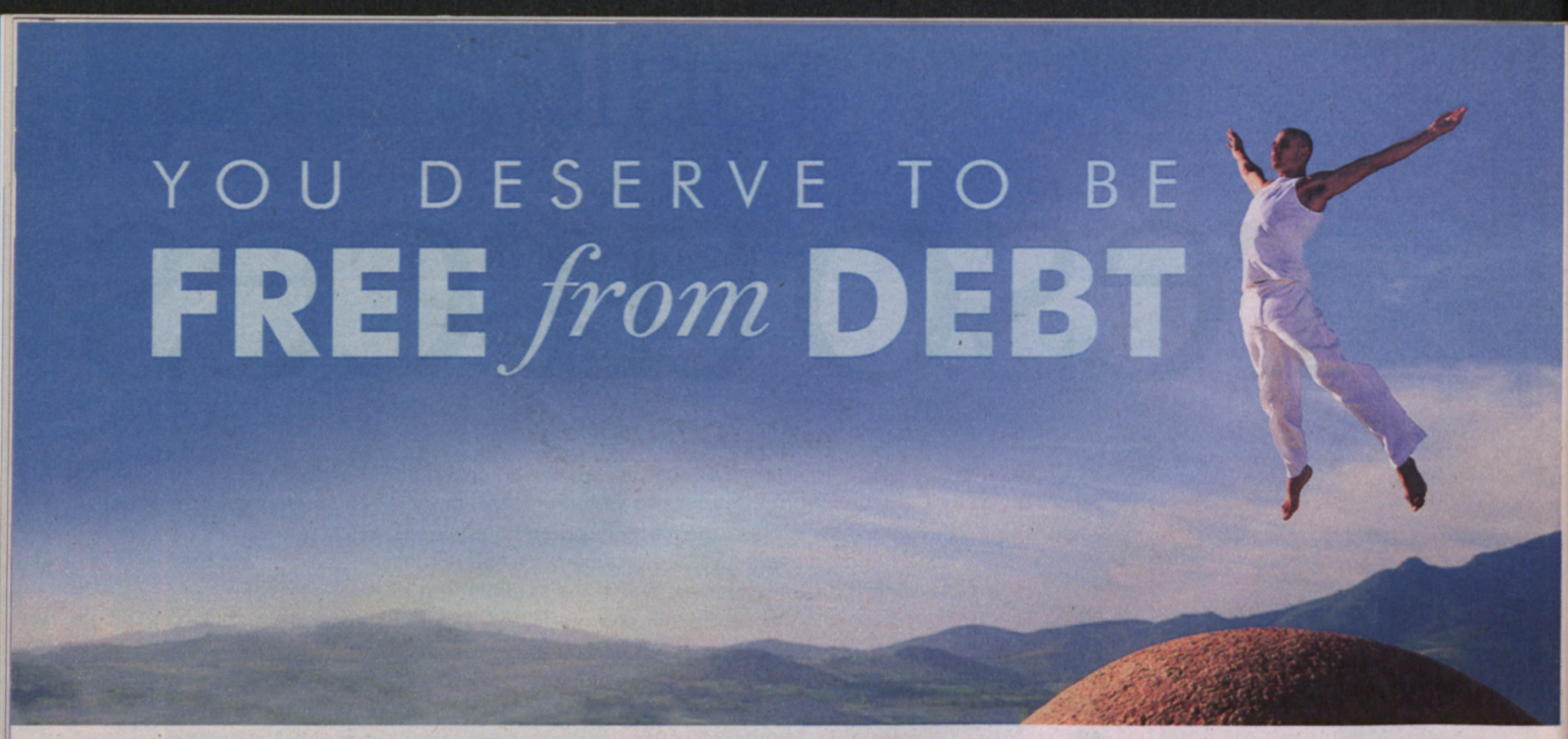
This fall, the Toyota International Teacher Program will send 20 full-time secondary school teachers (grades 7–12) on a fully funded, 10-day study program to the Galapagos Islands, a World Heritage site. While there, educators will observe and explore environmental projects, speak with experts and community advocates, and participate in activities aimed at encouraging an internationally and environmentally oriented interdisciplinary curriculum.

The tour will include strenuous travel and rigorous physical activities while visiting locations in the Galapagos, including the islands of Santa Cruz, Isabella, and San Cristobal.

Teachers will be selected from nine states: Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Texas. Educators in Washington, D.C., are also eligible to apply. The deadline for applications is **April 21, 2006.**

For more information, go to **www.iie.org/programs/toyota.**

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



Liberate yourself from debt with affordable monthly payments at rates as low as 6.99% APR.†

When you need help with debts that are weighing you down, you can count on the NEA.

An **NEA Personal Loan®** account allows you to consolidate your high-interest bills and credit card debts into affordable monthly payments at low, member-only rates available. That way, you could save every month as your debt†† disappears.

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  (Repayment term starts after deferral period; finance charges will accrue)
- Loan amounts from $3,000 to $25,000Δ
- Repayment terms from 24 to 84 months
- No collateral required and no pre-payment penalties

NEA Personal Loan Estimated Monthly Payment

Loan Amount	TERM					
	24 months	36 months	48 months	60 months	72 months	84 months
$3,000	$140	$96	$75	$62	N/A	N/A
$10,000	$463	$319	$248	$205	$177	N/A
$15,000	$694	$479	$371	$307	$265	$234
$25,000	N/A	$797	$618	$512	$441	$390

Payment amounts are estimates based on a 6.99% APR. Your APR may be higher. See below for important APR disclosures.†

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The NEA wants you to be freed from your debts.
To apply for an NEA Personal Loan account, call **1-866-266-0211** and mention priority code **L4FC**, **for a decision in as little as 10 minutes** or visit **www.neamb.com/pl**

(Call Mon.-Thurs. 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., or Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time, TDD users, call 1-800-833-6262)

†MBNA will set your Annual Percentage Rate (APR) between 6.99% and 17.99%, based on creditworthiness. MBNA reserves the right to change your APR, fees or other credit terms at its discretion; however, any APR change will not affect any balance on your account at the time of the change. In most cases, a change in the APR will restart your repayment term and change your minimum monthly payment. There is a 1% transaction fee for all advances (fee: min $2; max $10). Other fees may apply.

††MBNA may prohibit use of an NEA Personal Loan account to pay off or pay down another MBNA® account.

*This account offers a 4-month payment deferral feature if you take an advance within the first four months. During the deferral period, no payment will be due. Finance charges will accrue. Your repayment term will start after the deferral period. You may pre-pay at any time without penalty.

ΔUpon approval, MBNA will establish your credit line between $3,000 and $25,000 based on creditworthiness.

The NEA is not involved in the credit application process. All applications are subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America Bank, N.A. This account is issued and administered by MBNA America Bank, N.A. MBNA, the MBNA logo, and the tree symbol are service marks of MBNA America Bank, N.A., PO Box 15133, Wilmington, DE 19885-5133.

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The NEA Personal Loan program has been developed for NEA Members and their families only. Eligible NEA family members include parents, spouse (or domestic partner) and children. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates and fees offered through the NEA Personal Loan program. If eligible, a replacement loan may be offered.

Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

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PLNT0406

BUILDING BRIDGES

The MetLife Foundation Bridge Builders Grant Program and the National Association of Secondary School Principals invite public middle and high schools serving large numbers of low-income students and/or underrepresented minorities (40 percent or more of the student body) to apply for a grant to implement a special initiative aimed at building better relationships among adults and students. Twenty-five schools will each receive an award of $5,000.

For details, visit **www.principals.org/s_nassp/index.asp** and select "Grants & Scholarships" from the menu on the left.

The grant application deadline is **April 17, 2006.**

'NATURE OF LEARNING' START-UP GRANTS

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is offering start-up grants to schools and organizations interested in initiating the "Nature of Learning" in their communities. The program is a community-based environmental education initiative that seeks to use national wildlife refuges as outdoor classrooms to:

PROMOTE a greater understanding of local conservation issues

ENCOURAGE an interdisciplinary approach to learning

USE FIELD experiences and student-led stewardship projects to connect classroom lessons to real-world issues and

CREATE a partnership among local schools, community groups, natural resource professionals, and local businesses.

Grants of up to $5,000 will be awarded on a competitive basis to support start-up expenses associated with new programs. Grants of up to $3,000 will be awarded to provide continued support for existing programs. The deadline for applications is **April 17, 2006.**

For more, see **www.nfwf.org/programs/tnol.cfm.**

WIN A DOCUMENT CAMERA FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

Looking to get rid of transparencies and enhance your classroom presentations?

AVerMedia Technologies Inc. is conducting an essay contest, open to all U.S. schools and education facilities, that will award four teachers brand new document cameras. Document cameras allow you to display documents and small 3-D objects on a screen, television, projector, or monitor. The contest requires an original 100- to 300-word essay by an administrator, teacher, or student that creatively describes their desire for a camera, how it would be used in the classroom, and its anticipated benefits.

For complete contest guidelines and prize information, visit the AVerMedia Web site at **www.avermedia-usa.com/contest.shtml**.

Essays must be submitted to **avtessaycontest@aver.com** via e-mail by **April 28, 2006.**

Ruben R. Murillo, Jr.
Elementary Teacher • Las Vegas, Nevada

"The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education helps bring us together to elect and support legislators who believe in the great value of Public Education. I've seen it work to bring about positive change in my state. To all my colleagues I say, "Please, give to The NEA Fund!"

Contribute to The NEA Fund for Children & Public Education.
Go to **www.neafund.org**.

DIVERSITY CALENDAR

APRIL

APRIL 2–8—NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK
Sponsored by the American Library Association, this week encourages youth and adults to use and support libraries of all types. For information, go to www.ala.org/ala/pio/campaign/nlw/NLW.htm.

APRIL 10–16—YOUNG PEOPLE'S POETRY WEEK
Encourage students to celebrate poetry during this weeklong event sponsored by the Children's Book Council, the American Academy of Poets, and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Find ideas for sharing poetry at www.cbcbooks.org/yppw/.

APRIL 22—EARTH DAY
It wouldn't be spring without this annual event to acknowledge our responsibility for the environment and make a commitment to act on the Earth's behalf. This year's focus is on solutions to climate change. For more, check out www.earthday.net.

MAY

MAY 1–31—NATIONAL PHYSICAL FITNESS AND SPORTS MONTH
Sponsored by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, this month is the time to start participating in regular physical activity and learn about the benefits of exercise. Visit www.fitness.gov for more information.

MAY 4—HORACE MANN'S BIRTHDAY
Horace Mann (1796–1859) is considered the father of U.S. free public schools.

MAY 5—CINCO DE MAYO
The anniversary of the Mexican victory over the French army in the 1862 Battle of Puebla.

MAY 22—INT'L DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
This day focuses on raising awareness of how pollution, overuse, and habitat destruction threaten species and biological diversity. Go to www.biodiv.org/programmes/outreach/awareness/biodiv-day-2006.shtml.

10 Riveting Films

10 Award-Winning Filmmakers

1 Unprecedented Event

April 9th – April 13th
Expect the Unexpected

THE HISTORY CHANNEL.
History.com

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On TV

A&E CLASSROOM: TEEN GAMBLING

A&E, April 4, 7 a.m. ET/PT.
Part of the *Investigative Reports* series, this program reveals how some teens have discovered an addictive sport and become part of the fastest growing segment of gamblers. And with Internet gambling on the rise, teens are especially vulnerable. Each morning from April 4–7, *Investigative Reports* will focus on topics of interest to teens in middle and high school, including hazing, sports, and street racing. Tape and use in class for two years. Visit www.aetv.com/class/teach/index.html#i.

Rx FOR SURVIVAL—THE HEROES

PBS, April 12, 9–11 p.m., ET/PT. Check local listings.
This two-hour version of last year's acclaimed six-hour *Rx for Survival* series focuses on individuals who have saved millions of lives. A young businessman leads a pioneering HIV/AIDS program in Botswana. Two doctors in Peru stop a deadly strain of tuberculosis from spreading worldwide. A group of grand prix racers drive motorcycles across Africa and train health workers to drive and repair them, delivering critical care and supplies to remote areas. A volunteer army of 49,000 grandmothers in Nepal distributes life-saving Vitamin A capsules to 3.5 million children in just two days. Tape and use in the classroom for one year. Visit www.pbs.org/rxforsurvival for extensive teacher materials.

NICK NEWS WITH LINDA ELLERBEE: SAFARI SO GOOD

Nickelodeon, April 12 and 28, 6 a.m., ET/PT.
This segment of the popular TV news magazine for kids in grades 4–6 explores the Kenyan wilderness, from wild animals to extinct volcanoes to the Kenyan people and cultures. Tape and use in your classroom for 10 years.

THE GREAT QUAKE

National Geographic Channel, April 16, 8 p.m. ET/PT.
Lessons learned from natural disasters such as San Francisco's 1906 Great Quake reverberate today. On April 18, 100 years ago, the city suffered a massive earthquake felt as far away as Los Angeles. While the quake was enormous, the city could have survived intact, but for the fires that came next. For four days San Francisco burned. Dynamite was used to create a firebreak, saving what was left of the city. This dramatization follows the attempts to fight fire with fire, and catalogs the experiences of a nurse, photographer, newspaper writer, and immigrant. The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco has extensive resources on the 1906 quake at www.sfmuseum.org/1906/06.html.

ROAD TO REVOLUTION

Discovery Channel, April 19, 5 a.m. ET/PT.
This program examines the conditions and causes of the American Revolution, with a look at the Boston Massacre, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, and the colonists who fought the war. Tape and use in your classroom for one year. Teaching materials are available at www.discoveryschool.com.

APE TO MAN

History Channel, April 24–25, 6 a.m. ET/PT.
This two-part program traces the study of human evolution from the discovery of Neanderthal man in 1856 to present scientific theories. Tape and use in your class for two years. A companion Web site with additional resources is at www.historychannel.com/apetoman.

CONCEPTS IN BUSINESS MATHEMATICS: ECONOMICS AND FINANCE

Discovery Channel, April 25, 5 a.m. ET.
Look back at math and mercantilism in the Colonial era and explore the economic concepts of simple and compound interest, linear programming, and profit and loss. The show can be taped and used in the classroom for one year with teaching materials at www.discoveryschool.com.

On TV listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and by Cable in the Classroom's Access Learning magazine at www.ciconline.org.

Reading All Year Long

NEA's Read Across America Day may be over, but our commitment to reading continues. April kicks off a new soccer season and new activities and resources at *Get a Kick Out of Reading!/ ¡Lee y Marca un Golazo!*— NEA's bilingual partnership with Major League Soccer. Check out www.getakickoutofreading.org for booklists, team profiles, and more.

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Parents and kids are seeing a different type of change from school vending machines.

Healthy and active kids can certainly enjoy soft drinks as part of a balanced lifestyle. While parents can help kids make good nutrition and regular exercise priorities at home, they can't always control the decisions they make at school. So they've looked to us for help. And we're responding.

Our industry has introduced a new school vending policy that will make a variety of beverage choices available to kids of different ages. The right beverages for the right age at the right time. It's the right thing to do.

Parents are clearly happy with the change. In fact, 82 percent* of parents nationwide support our new vending policy. And school systems are already including our policy in their 2006 wellness plans.

For years, the beverage industry has worked to reduce obesity and promote overall wellness through nutrition education and fitness programs. We know it will take kids, parents, schools, communities and business all working together to address the complex problem of childhood obesity. Our industry is stepping up to do its part. After all, everyone wants happy, healthy kids.

Our new school vending policy:

The right beverages for the right age at the right time.

Elementary School
- Only bottled water and 100 percent juice.

Middle School
- Only nutritious and/or lower-calorie beverages during school hours.

High School
- Variety of beverage choices.
- No more than 50 percent soft drinks.

AMERICAN BEVERAGE ASSOCIATION

*August 17-20, 2005 national survey of 800 adults conducted by Public Opinion Strategies (margin of error is ± 3.46%)

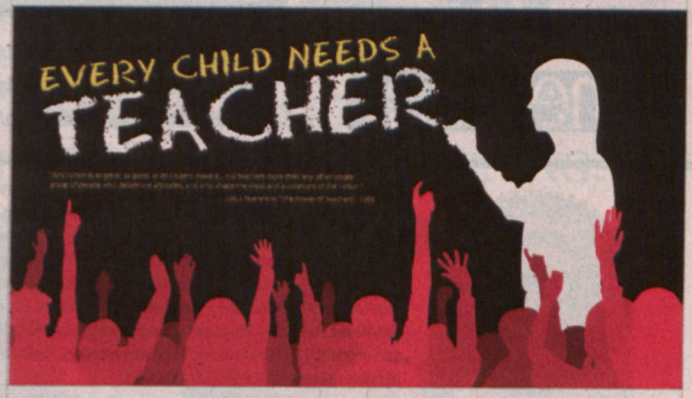
Take Note

Deducting Classroom Expenses

If you haven't completed your tax forms yet, it's not too late to get back a little of those funds you spent supplementing your classroom materials. Teachers and other educators can deduct up to $250 that they spent last year from their own money to buy classroom supplies. You can claim the deduction directly on Form 1040 or Form 1040A—there's no need to itemize. According to the Internal Revenue Service, the deduction applies if you worked at least 900 hours during the school year as a teacher, instructor, counselor, principal, or aide in a school that provides elementary or secondary education, as determined under state law. For more details, go to **www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc458.html**.

Working for Education for All

Celebrated in April, **Global Action Week** is one of many activities undertaken by Education International (EI) to remind governments and donor agencies of their commitment to provide quality public education to all children. EI—the international organization of education unions (NEA is a member)—and its partner organization—the Global Campaign for Education—are demanding the right to schooling for millions of children currently excluded from education. This year Global Action Week takes place **April 24–30** and the theme is, "Every Child Needs a Teacher." Teachers worldwide and many unions affiliated with EI in 166 countries will organize events to focus attention on universal education and the 15 million new teachers needed to attain it. To find out how you can get involved in this international effort, and to access materials, go to **www.ei-ie.org/globalactionweek/** or **www.nea.org/international**.



BOOKS BY NEA MEMBERS

GROUNDHOG GETS A SAY

By Pamela Curtis Swallow

Groundhogs can do a lot more than predict weather, and one groundhog thinks it's time everyone knows. As revealed to the author—an educator and librarian—by a stellar specimen in her back yard, groundhogs are tidy, intelligent animals with keen hearing and a talent for digging. In fact, they can move 700 pounds of earth and rock in a day! Find out more in this exposé of groundhog life during the *other* 364 days of the year. Ages 5–8. 35 pp. $15.99 from G.P. Putnam's Sons. www.penguin.com/young readers.

DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP PROGRAM: OVER 100 IDEAS, LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEADERSHIP SKILLS

By Tim Krieger and Melanie Walczak

Self-confidence, ethics, goal setting, motivation, and time management are qualities and skills that should be learned by middle and high school. This book describes a successful leadership development program and provides information and resources to help educators implement a program their own schools. 172 pp. $32.50. Find excerpts, ordering info, and more at http://teachingtheleaders.com.

ALOHAHONU

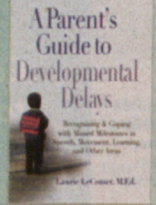
By Barbara E. Berg

Using English text with Hawaiian translations and vibrant watercolors, the author, a middle school teacher, relates a unique tale of the *honu*—the Hawaiian green sea turtle. Young Alohahonu enjoys a day of swimming in the bay, then discovers an older turtle caught in fishing line—a constant danger to this threatened species. Unable to help, Alohahonu dreams of a magical rescue by a mermaid. CD-ROM included. 22 pp. $15. To order, e-mail palahonu@yahoo.com or go to http://alohahonu.com.

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

By Laurie LeComer

Nothing causes a parent to worry like developmental delays—when a child is slow to achieve typical milestones in cognition, speech and language, motor skills, and other areas of development. Special educator Laurie LeComer recommends parents first trust their instincts—nobody knows their child as well as they do. Using real-life examples and case studies, she then surveys a range of delays and disorders, offering checklists and easy-to-understand advice to help parents spot red flags and implement early interventions. 280 pp. $14.95 from Perigee. To order, go to www.amazon.com.



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Using Common Scents

While we may enjoy the way some personal products smell, like perfumed body sprays and aftershaves, exposure to too many can trigger sinus problems and asthma attacks—both to users and the people around them.

Fragrances are usually just an unknown "cocktail of chemicals," says Stacy Malkan of Health Care Without Harm (www.hcwh.org), which recently brought 72 popular body products, including hair sprays and deodorants, into a lab to analyze their contents. Most items tested—including all of the fragrances—contained phthalates, which are associated with serious birth defects. Japan and the European Union already have phthalates bans in place, but legislation in the United States has lagged, allowing companies to protect ingredients as trade secrets. The NEA Health Information Network is collecting data about fragrances and modes of application that cause problems for NEA members and encourages you to fill out a questionnaire at www.neahealthinfo.org/programs/environmental/iaq.htm.

NEA Health Information Network Sponsors Effort to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

NEA HIN

On **May 3, 2006,** hundreds of thousands of teens nationwide are expected to participate in the fifth annual **National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy**. The event reaches teens directly through an innovative online quiz.

On May 3 (and for a few weeks thereafter), teens will be encouraged to visit the official Web site at **www.teenpregnancy.org** to take a short, engaging, quiz that asks them to reflect on the best course of action in a number of tough and realistic sexual situations.

Last year, over 630,000 people took the quiz. A survey of some of those participants indicates that the quiz is a success:

- 84 percent said the quiz made them think about what they might do in such situations
- 66 percent said it made the risks of sex and pregnancy seem more real
- 63 percent said they would encourage others to take the quiz.

For ideas on promoting this event, visit **www.teenpregnancy.org/national.**

help prevent teen pregnancy

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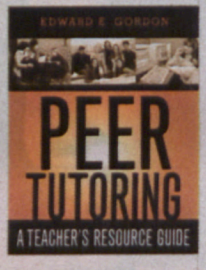
In Print

AARGH! A PIRATE'S LIFE FOR ME

When young Jeremy Jacobs is invited to join Braid Beard's pirate crew, he thinks it's a dream come true. Aboard ship, Jeremy can throw food and go to bed whenever he pleases, but when he learns what pirates *don't* do, he begins to miss home. Written by Melinda Long and illustrated by David Shannon, ***How I Became a Pirate*** is a charming tale that will make you laugh—from the safety of your chair. Ages 3–7. 44 pp. $16 from Harcourt Children's Books. Go to www.harcourtbooks.com.

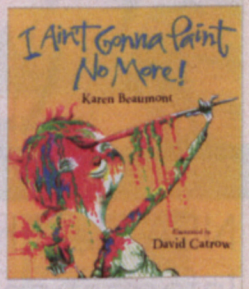
STRATEGIES FOR PEER AND CROSS-AGE TUTORING

With decades of experience, Edward E. Gordon is a reliable source for strategies regarding the design and implementation of peer and cross-age tutoring. In ***Peer Tutoring: A Teacher's Resource Guide*** he explores what makes tutoring an effective tool, and which students are likely to benefit. The book features practical approaches for elementary, high school, and college level programs, including tips for training tutors, and sample program assessment forms. He also traces success stories from real research. 80 pp. $21.95 from ScarecrowEducation. To order, visit www.rowmaneducation.com.



DANGER—ARTIST AT WORK

Almost every child has the urge to color outside the lines, but in ***I Ain't Gonna Paint No More*** one boy takes the impulse to alarming extremes. After flooding the floors, furniture, and walls with an explosion of color, he sets his sights on the canvas of his own body. A bath will be in order. Syncopated rhymes by Karen Beaumont (recalling "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More") and riotous illustrations by David Catrow pull us irresistibly through the fever of a young artist's obsession. An American Library Association Notable Book suitable for pre-school–grade 2. 32 pp. $16 from Harcourt Children's Books. To order, go to www.harcourtbooks.com.



THE ANTIDOTE FOR 'WE'RE BORED'

Play with Us: 100 Games from Around the World promises to keep kids active and entertained for hours. Author Oriol Ripoll offers a comprehensive international collection of games that can be played indoors or out, alone or with friends. Most require nothing beyond a few household items. Grouped by similarity, games are identified by country of origin, and children will learn about the customs of other cultures as they discover the roots of their favorite activities. All ages. 128 pp. $16.95 from Chicago Review Press. To order, go to www.ipgbook.com.

Heads Up from NEA Member Benefits

PAVE A SMOOTH PATH TO YOUR NEW FRONT DOOR

IF YOU'RE IN THE MARKET to purchase a home this spring or summer, finding out up front how much "home" you can afford can make the process a whole lot easier.

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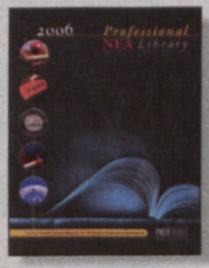

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A Life in Education

Working to give children of all races quality schools.

BY VILMA LEAKE

When I was a child, teaching and preaching were pretty much the only professions Black people could be trained in. But those were two great professions.

My parents and many of my relatives were educators. And when I was six years old, I would put together the chairs at home and talk to them as if they were my students. I would tell them about reading and writing and obeying the teacher, and making sure they did their homework—whatever my teacher had said that day, I would tell the chairs.

When I grew up, I married a man studying to be a preacher and put him through seminary with the money I made teaching. I remember walking down the street with my first paycheck in my pocket—$160, which was a lot of money.

My husband, Rev. (later Bishop) George J. Leake, was a Freedom Rider, and Martin Luther King Jr. visited our home.

We believed that school desegregation was the key to improving education for Black children. When I started teaching high school sociology and psychology in Charlotte, North Carolina, the lawyer who represented the parents fighting school segregation, Julius Chambers, was a good friend of ours. I was teaching high school when the landmark *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* school desegregation order was handed down in 1971.

"WE CAN'T GIVE UP on public schools. They give everybody a chance."

Desegregation was not easy. In 1972, on my first day back in school after surgery, a riot broke out. I remember White auto mechanics students running down the hall waving chains. Some of the Black kids were hiding in classrooms, some were fighting, some were out in the schoolyard waiting to fight. The teachers were trying to calm everybody down. We were not afraid to confront the kids—it was our job to keep all students safe.

Vilma Leake with some of the students she mentored, and (right) as a young teacher during the turbulent 1970s.

The police came out and arrested a lot of students and the principal dismissed school. But we didn't give up and eventually we made it work. The faith community embraced desegregation, So did many high-level business people, who put their children in the public schools. The community came together, although some were still against it.

Why did we want Black children to go to school with White children? I never thought sitting next to a White child was going to make you learn, but resources follow White children, not poor Black children.

Under the ruling, the faculty was integrated and so were the sports teams. Some classes were still mostly White or mostly Black, but before, Black high schools didn't have high-level science at all, so at least now the Black students had some exposure.

In those days, we were full of hope that Black and White children would go to school together and together build a better, stronger future.

But in 2002, a new and very different Supreme Court ended our desegregation plan. I was involved again—I was no longer teaching, but I had been elected to the school board. This time, the majority of the board was for keeping desegregation, but the Court said no.

Today, our schools in Charlotte are becoming more segregated, and most of the high-level business people have their children in private schools. On the school board, we're trying to keep things as equitable as we can—for example, trying to get more experienced teachers to work in the high-poverty schools.

We can't give up on public schools. Their doors are open. They give everybody a chance to get an education. And because of that, they are the salvation of democracy, the lifeblood of America.

Vilma Leake, a member of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, is former president of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Association of Educators.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF VILMA LEAKE

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